



"Oh, stand firm for the old, simple, immutable things." James J. Hill delivering the opening address at the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition, Seattle, June 1st, 1909.

# GEORGE R. LEIGHTON

# FIVE CITIES

THE STORY OF THEIR YOUTH AND OLD AGE



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### PIVE CITIES

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For

C. F. GUND

of Crawford, Nebraska

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# FIVE CITIES

On an afternoon in March, 1938, Arminia Evans Avery lay asleep in Tunkhannock, a little Pennsylvania town on the Susquehanna River, not far north of Wilkes-Barre. She was ninety-four years old and she was dying a slow, deliberate death of old age. During the preceding days her descendants had been coming by ones and twos to take their farewell. Now beside her bed were her grandson and her one great-grandson awaiting their turn.

She was intensely old. In maturity she had been a slender woman with delicate features. Now her head was barely more than a skull, all the bones showing plainly and her closed eyes sunk deep in their sockets. Her white hair was cut short, one hand little more than bone rested upon the patchwork comfortable. Her breath came in long, slow breaths, so slow that sometimes it seemed that breathing had stopped altogether. Then it would come, evidence that the machinery that had operated so faithfully all those ninety-four years was still obedient to the demands made upon it.

"Is she dead yet?" said the little boy.

"No," said his father. "She's asleep. She will wake up pretty soon."

The man and the little boy watched.

This woman's preacher father had ridden circuit through this Pennsylvania wilderness region where Indians still lived, helping the settlers build log churches. This woman's mother had told her of a day when money was scarcely seen, when a little silver was hoarded to pay taxes and buy tea. This woman's Welsh grandfather, a soldier in the British Army sent to subdue the rebellious colonists, was buried over on the other side of Miller Mountain. Nothing was known of him except that he could write his name and was thought to have been a yeoman. The bones of another forebear were in the Wyoming monument, along with the others killed in the massacre. All were immigrants from the old country, settling in a wilderness.

When this woman at sixteen went to the Seminary, she went down the river road to Kingston in a stagecoach. She was at school there when the news came of the firing on Sumter and she had said good-bye to Southern boys, going home to fight. She had seen the war spirit die away and in her own village had heard the cursing against the draft. In 1864 she had married a young man who ran a grist mill down by the river and had seen him die of a mysterious "consumption." As a widow she kept a dame school in the village and so little was known of contagion that her own small daughter, ill of scarlet fever, was left in bed near the schoolroom.

Her own brother, a wilderness boy, had gone to New York in the sixties and become an iron broker. She had married again and had seen the village tannery bought by "the Trust" and closed down; she had seen her husband's foundry and machine shop slowly fade out and her sons become interested in automobiles. She had seen the old stagecoach river road turned into a concrete highway for trucks that never stopped in the village but went straight through to Buffalo. She had seen the farm families over the river die out one by one and the farms go to ruin. She had

seen Polish coal miners come up from Wilkes-Barre and Pittston and buy the run-down farms and make them bloom again. She had seen almost a hundred years of America and now she was dying.

Slowly her eyelids lifted and the old woman lay quiet, looking straight up at the ceiling.

"Has the funeral been arranged?" she said, seeing no one. Her daughter heard, looked in the door, and then went away again.

Then, with deliberation so slow that it was difficult to follow the movement, the old woman began to turn her head. Little by little it moved until, after a lapse of minutes, her eyes, gray and clear and steady, rested upon the man and the little boy. There was no recognition. But as the two watched they could see the recognition coming, just as deliberately as had been the turning of the head. At last it came. She knew.

"I am glad that you have come," she said.

She looked at the little boy for a while.

"A fine boy," she said.

She looked at the man.

"How is everything?"

"All right."

There was a considerable pause while she thought.

"Are you finding out a good deal about the country?"

"A good deal," the man said.

"You have found out some things about the people in those towns but not all. Shenandoah you tell about. They have trouble now but they do not have a lot of the trouble you tell about because the people who had those troubles are all dead and it was long ago." The old woman closed her eyes.

"Can I go now?" the little boy asked.

"Yes," his father said.

After a while the old woman opened her eyes again and, without effort, since her head was turned, looked directly at her grandson.

"I would like to ask you a question," he said.

"All right."

"Why was it that you never gave anyone—your children, your friends, anyone—your confidence? Did you have some secret?"

The old woman's eyes were fixed upon her grandson.

"The secret is that there was never any secret . . . I didn't give anybody any confidences because there weren't any to give."

She was silent again and it was almost as though under the skull and the transparent skin the machinery of her mind could be seen at work—thinking—so slowly that one could all but see each thought being put together, every nail and screw in each thought, slowly and surely being driven home. Finally:

"For a long time when I was young it was very difficult for me to talk to people. I could not get through. It troubled me a great deal because I was fond of people, I could not live without them. I was uneasy and could not feel at home . . . in the world. Then, one day, I knew. I knew that in some way I could not understand, people knew how I felt and that I did not need to worry or work over it any more. That is all there is to the secret and that is why there were no confidences. Confidences are made by people who are

afraid, but I was no longer afraid and so there was nothing to tell."

She stopped talking in order to think again.

"The world," she said, "is in dreadful torment now." The clock on her dresser could be heard ticking. "I hear a great deal of criticism of the President. Do you?"

Her grandson nodded.

"Do you know anyone," she said, "who could do any better?"

"No."

"Neither do I," she said.

The old woman's daughter came into the room.

"Are you tired from talking, Mother?" she asked.

"If I don't talk now," said the old woman, "I never will." She looked at her grandson again.

"Do you believe—you know, Hitler, Russia, people here without food or hope—do you believe that the world is coming to an end?"

"Almost," the man said, "but not quite."

A look of confidence, born out of some knowledge that the man could not fathom, spread over the old woman's face. Her body was almost done, but thought and spirit remained.

"It isn't coming to an end. It's such a little while since men got up off the ground. So many ways are useless now. They shut down the tannery. They don't come down the river road to market any more."

With the slowest of motions she raised her hand, so soon to be just a member of a skeleton, and laid it against her face.

"We get so used to doing things one way . . . and you

can only change a little at a time. We have got to believe we can find new ways because that is what we always do and until we do believe it, people are afraid. That's what makes this awful trouble, being afraid."

She closed her eyes again and then spoke without opening them.

"All over the world there are people afraid . . . millions of people crying in the dark. They are frightened . . . they tear each other to pieces."

When she opened her eyes again her grandson could see in them complete repose.

"It will never work that way," she said. "But when the strain gets so people can't stand it any more, somehow light will come and we shall see many things that have been here all the time."

She was very tired now but from somewhere in her she found a breath of effort left.

"You have to work with what you've got and that's all there is to work with. You can't start out anywhere except from the place you come from. People can't do it any other way here in the United States either. It's all plain, but we don't see it yet. The people in all those towns, they are frightened and sometimes murderous, just because in one way or another they're crying in the dark. And that's all, I guess."

Just before suppertime she died.

# SHENANDOAH, PENNSYLVANIA

### THE RISE AND FALL OF AN ANTHRACITE TOWN

"I'll turn Schuylkill County into a howling wilderness before I give in to the miners."

-Ascribed to Franklin B. Gowen, President of the Philadelphia & Reading Railroad, 1876

"The rights and interests of the laboring man will be protected and cared for . . . by the Christian men to whom God in his infinite wisdom has given the control of the property interests of this country."

-George F. Baer, President of the Philadelphia

& Reading Railway, 1902

"The Pennsylvania anthracite industry was for many decades one of the richest and most lucrative monopolies in the United States. There was no other important known supply of anthracite on this continent ... profits, dividends and royalties swelled in an ever increasing golden flood . . . In the last ten years all that has changed."

-Anthracite Coal Industry Commission, 1938

Years ago someone with imagination surveyed the wild and gloomy character of the anthracite region of Pennsylvania and said that if one stood on the crest of the Alleghenies and looked eastward, he might see not hills and valleys, but long rolling breakers of stony surf, petrified waves a thousand feet high. In the trough of one of these waves lies the coal-mining town of Shenandoah. This is the story of Shenandoah—a story that reflects the rise, power, and decline of a great industry.

The traveler, looking down from Bear Ridge, can see a large hummock thrown up on the valley floor; Shenandoah is on the hummock. The houses are huddled and crowded together, the roofs close, sloping gradually to a rounded peak at the top of the hummock, with only the Latin crosses and the bulbous Greek Catholic domes rising above the town. In the rain and mist of an autumn twilight the prospect is strange and forbidding. Ordinary life is concealed; the winking lights of a distant breaker are foggy, the rumbling of the machinery is dulled. The road down from the Ridge is steep and winding, and over the precipitous edge a blackened colliery can be seen, shut down now, all dark and still.

The road goes on down the mountain, reaches the valley, and then begins to rise toward the hummock and the town. On the right is the Shenandoah City Colliery, also closed down. It was painted red once, but the coal has blackened it and now, with a thousand window lights smashed, the dark mountains of culm behind it, it is a wild ruin. There isn't a light or a puff of smoke. The great stacks are rusted, the engine room is shut up. On a spur track that runs up to the breaker are four empty Reading coal cars, but the tracks are rusted too. On the town side runs a little stream of blackened water overhung with blackened willow trees, and between the stream and the breaker the weeds grow up. The only person to be found near this Melrose Abbey is an old watchman who smokes a foul-smelling pipe and, like his charge, is sullen and without speech.

The road rises a few feet more and then enters Shenan-doah, a memorial to the age of rampant industry. Pottsville, the county seat, may lay some claim to elegance. There, in





2. SHENANDOAH BREAKER BOYS, 1902

the early days, the coal operators built their mansions; many are still standing. The burial ground, which the town now surrounds, has bending trees, an ornamental gateway. The winding streets give an impression of wealth. The Civil War memorials, the shaft to Henry Clay, the huge old courthouse looking down from its steep height on the town, the red sandstone Gothic jail, dating from the fifties, the river and the mountains with their green that push right into the town-all are solid, satisfied. There the amenities of life had a chance. But not so in Shenandoah. Here there is no concession to aesthetics. This is and has been a mining town, where the work is done. Most of the wealth has gone elsewhere; what trade there is here depends on miners' wages. The houses along these steep streets are and always have been miners' dwellings. Most acutely the traveler feels that he is standing on a battlefield, and that is almost an exact statement of the case. For seventy-five years this has been a battleground and it still is.

Much of the town dates from the great fire of '83. The general impression of the place, despite new store fronts, is that of a town of the eighties grown old and dingy. Main and Centre Streets are the principal thoroughfares, and the buildings clustering round their intersection tell the story. Max Levit's haberdashery is in an old three-story red-brick building with a white cornice. Across Main Street is the Ferguson Hotel, a gray-brick building with the damp and musty odor that forever hangs round small-town taverns. On the northeast corner is the five-story limestone Shenandoah Trust Building; but the depression disposed of the Trust Company, and now the banking room is occupied by Stief's Cut Rate Drug and Quick Lunch.

Aside from some packing plants and a shirt factory or two, established when factory labor laws drove the business away from New York, there is no industry here except coal. It is coal that makes this town live and breathe. Stand in any street and look down it, the sole prospect is coal—railroad tracks, culm piles, breakers, and the mountains rising up behind them. Dingy the town may be but not desolate. The wild and almost melodramatic character of the region, the dark mountains that wall the place in, the very place names—Raven Run, Dark Water, Ellengowan—combine with the mines and the miners to give an impression of strong, restless, flesh-and-blood life.

The streets-some paved with cobbles, some with crumbled macadam, and some only dirt-are pitched at crazy angles. Where the land has caved, the houses are jacked up with the front steps at the street level and the back porch twenty and thirty feet aboveground. The vacant lot where once John Mitchell addressed the miners is now a rocky hollow where boys shoot craps. Down the dirt path comes a priest, umbrella in one hand, the other lifting his gown out of the puddles. The Catholics, Greek and Roman, predominate, and their huge, ugly churches are at every hand. St. Michael's Greek Catholic Church, a big, gray structure with Byzantine domes, overawes this part of town with hideousness. Behind it is a dirt alley, crowded with miners' houses. Down past Sakalosky's garage, five children are crowded on a doorstep, quarreling over a division of penny candy. A young Polish girl of perhaps eighteen, her blond hair in curl papers, shod in black satin mules with pink ostrich pompons and dressed in a wrapper, is picking her way through the wet to the corner grocery.

Two blocks away, the Gladskis' kitchen is in an uproar. It's Labor Day and raining, so the holiday is off, and instead there will be a beer drinking in the basement. Old man Gladski, who came from Poland in '93, sits near the stove. He has wiry gray hair, almost white, and a heavy gray mustache. When he greets a visitor he gets up gravely and says "How do you do" in a soft guttural and then goes back into his silence. His eyes are gentle and he is kind with the children, but he is tired and glad enough for the warmth and that his mining days are over. Sometimes though he will wake in the morning at the whistle and, so strong is the instinct, half turn to get out of bed before he remembers that he will never go down in the cage again and that he has seen the last of a gangway. There is not much left in his age but cigarettes, which he likes, and perhaps the contemplation of a life that goes back and back to the day when he was called up from his gray Polish prairie to serve his time in the Tzar's army.

Joe, with whom he lives, is the youngest of his sons and a miner like the rest. He never knew Poland; he went to school in Shenandoah. Tall and blond, he has no accent. He talks Polish to please his father, but not otherwise. In the grandchildren, save for the tow hair and blue eyes, the Pole has vanished.

Uptown, things are booming. Even this early, since it is a holiday, the saloons are running full blast. On all four corners at Main and Centre, groups of men are lounging about. Some of the younger miners wear blue wool jackets with zipper fasteners and snappy bow ties. One man is dressed up in a blue suit with a fawn-colored shirt and a light cap. He has straight black hair and a swarthy skin; alien still and his

clothes uneasy. But the young Pole—call him that for identification—beside him in gray flannel pants and a white pull-over sweater isn't an alien, and there's nothing alien about the young bucks in the poolroom over the way. In the poolroom window is a blackboard and on one side are painted in white letters a list of the collieries, "working" or "idle," in the region roundabout: Kehley Run, Locust Gap, Bear Valley, Alaska, Mahanoy City, Potts, Packer No. 5, Raven Run, and many more. Any miner can pass by and at a glance know what is doing in the valley.

From the north end of the town, where the mountain rises abruptly once more, the picture is complete. There is the town on its hummock; away over ahead is the road that climbs Bear Ridge and winds through the little coal towns, over the hills, to Pottsville, the county seat. Below on every hand are the collieries, and toward the southeast the huge new St. Nicholas Breaker. In and out, crisscross, all over the valley, thread the railroad tracks—Lehigh Valley, Pennsylvania, and the Reading. On a wet night all this vanishes. Through the mist come foggy lights and wisps of smoke from mines that are working, while nearer at hand the dim gaunt shapes of abandoned breakers rear up in the dark like ruined fortresses.

2

The history of Shenandoah is bound up with the career of Franklin B. Gowen. In Gowen were brought together forces that influenced and altered the whole history of the anthracite region. He died, a suicide, nearly fifty years ago, but his name still lives in Shenandoah.

The son of a prosperous merchant of Philadelphia, Gowen-like Morgan, Hill, Rockefeller, and many another ambitious young man-could see small opportunity in the Union Army for him to get on in the world. In 1862, being then twenty-five years old, he was elected district attorney of Schuylkill County at the southern end of the anthracite country, a very small domain of four hundred and eightyfour square miles in the eastern part of Pennsylvania where practically all of the hard coal of North America is confined. Coal was known there before the Revolution, but it was not until the second quarter of the nineteenth century that the rush and the speculation began. There were thousands then who participated in the mad scramble. With the Civil War the demand skyrocketed and fortunes were made. It was just about this time, 1866, that the borough of Shenandoah was incorporated.

The industrial era was beginning. A wilderness of natural wealth was spread out before a nation hardly conscious of its riches. Resourceful men, untroubled with scruples and reckless of social consequences, could snatch prizes—and did. Young Gowen was spirited and he was ambitious; the peach was on the bough, the oyster open before his eyes. And he reached out to snatch. In 1864 his energy was known; his appointment as counsel to the Philadelphia & Reading Railroad gave him his opportunity.

This railway, chartered in 1833, had thrust itself up from Philadelphia to Reading and on into the coal region, where it spread out, pushing its branches up the valleys and absorbing other little railroads. In those days there were hundreds of coal operators scattered about over the mountainsides and through the hollows. There were other railroads in the

anthracite, but in this domain it was largely the Philadelphia & Reading that carried the coal. If ever there was an ideal prospect for a monopoly it was here. How would it be if the operators were dispensed with and the Reading owned not only the road but the very freight it carried, the coal itself? Gowen was entranced with the prospect and so were the Reading stockholders. In 1870, at thirty-three, he was elected president of the road and set about the business in hand.

To accomplish his ambitious scheme Gowen had to do two things: he had to get his hands on the coal lands and he had to get the miners under a firm control. He succeeded; in the end, though the road was mortgaged to the hilt, it had the coal, and the miners were prostrate. And as one of the results of his efforts, young Gowen set a wall round Shenandoah, set metes and bounds and determined the environment in which thousands of men and women should live and in which other thousands of children yet unborn must grow up. It was what these men and women—miners and their wives did about it that made Shenandoah and the wild country roundabout a battleground.

Most of the obligations of the Reading were owned in England, and to the security holders there Gowen addressed himself. The British bankers could no more withstand the man's wooing than could the prudent and godly John Wanamaker of Philadelphia. In that era of gaudy, hideous display Gowen moved like a stage financier. He captivated the greedy and the skinflint. He could do anything. He was in life the novelist's idea of the Gilded Age.

The admiration of the coal operators for Gowen was tinctured with some doubt; he could honey them when calling for war on the miners, but in acquiring the coal lands he could squeeze them to the wall. If the operator were desperate for cars he might be informed that there were none available. If he had cars he might find freight rates trebled. Sometimes, so great was Gowen's headlong rush, the operator found himself in a position to demand and get several prices for his mine. Within four years Gowen had acquired 100,000 acres of coal land and had spent \$40,000,000 in the process. Competition was ended, for the anthracite roads would act with him in concert and the few remaining independents were swung into line.

In a short time the Reading came to occupy a position of overpowering influence. "Although its [the Reading's] system is confined within a circle described by a radius of one hundred miles," said Gowen, "it moves far more tonnage than any railroad in the United States." It owned the railway, it owned the mines, it owned the telegraph lines, it controlled the ironworks: often it owned the houses in which the miners lived and the stores in which they were forced to buy their food, and just to keep things in order, it owned a police force. The presiding genius of this compact system, the man who gave the orders, was Gowen. Actually, he was the social trustee of a population of thousands. On occasion he would get aboard one of his own trains and go down to Harrisburg as the field general of the mining interests and the railways of Pennsylvania; he knew all about legislatures and had even assisted in writing the new State constitution. He was an ubiquitous character.

All this did not go unnoticed; the cry against monopoly has been heard in the anthracite region for more than one hundred years. Mr. Gowen heard himself and his road denounced before committees in the most blistering terms;

through his doings his road had come in "like a cormorant to take that which other people had built." These castigations did not seem to trouble Gowen; he enjoyed the sensational. Upon occasion he would hire a theater and invite the stockholders thither and address them. Like an actor he would recount his combats with bloodthirsty miners and jealous bankers and stock gamblers and then have his orations published!

He was an able, bold, ingenious, talkative, and showy plunger. Tradition makes him say: "I'll turn Schuylkill county into a howling wilderness before I give in to the miners." What he did has shaped and strait-jacketed the life and history of Shenandoah-and many another coal townto this day. The town and its inhabitants, a little capital of great natural wealth, were in effect completely under the thumb of this man. What he did not control directly in mine and rail and otherwise, he controlled indirectly. On his decision, ultimately, rested the wages, the very life of thousands. Occasionally local politics got out of hand, but little else. What a day that was when he rode through the region in an engine cab, proudly defiant when along the way he was stoned, jeered, and cursed. The Philadelphia & Reading Coal and Iron Company at this moment perforce follows the path that Gowen marked out. He has an interesting memorial. Once long ago his cook, a young Irish girl, married and went to live in Shenandoah. Mr. Gowen presented the bride with two ottomans, and in the front parlor of the bride's son, now approaching age himself, they remain. Two ottomans are what Mr. Gowen gave Shenandoah in exchange for what he took away!

Who were the miners? They were all native-born Amer-





4. SHENANDOAH COAL MINERS ABOUT 1900

icans in the beginning; but the demand for skilled men became so intense that the English and Welsh miners came over in great numbers. They were hardy types, with ideas about independence. Their religion was one of Baptist meetinghouses and prayer. On their heels, after the potato famine of '47, came a flood of Irish, young, hardy, and truculent. America was the land of liberty; they would have it.

Then they found the English and the Welsh already in the mines, regarded as the most valuable of all the coal diggers because of their skill. This meant that the Irish as unskilled labor were given the lowest pay and heaviest work. What would have galled them in any event now appeared intolerable on account of race feeling. Reared from childhood in hatred of the British oppressor, they found him still on their necks. To this feeling the English and the Welsh replied in kind. The Irish, fighting back, turned to organization and to politics.

Round about Shenandoah and the other little towns were the coal patches. Clustering near the breakers were wretched one- and two-room hovels, thrown together from cheap pine, seamed with cracks open to the cold, the broken window sashes stuffed with old petticoats. In such dwellings Denis McCann and Angus Lloyd and Ivor Jones and the rest lived and raised families of ten children—and let them all be boys! At eight or nine the little boys entered man's estate and became slate pickers, rising before dawn and working until nightfall, always under the shadow of the terrible chute boss with his club.

At nightfall the miner made his first stop at the saloon if his tick was good. A round of grog, the miner who had fought at Gettysburg quarreling with the miner who had been at Chancellorsville, mine gossip, wages, and how much longer was a miner to cut his timber after his day's work was done, and are we men!—and would the Hibernians parade at Mahanoy City or here in Shenandoah this Patrick's Day, and so Galvin was an Orangeman, was he, the bastard, and so at last home to the shanty and the wife who was waiting to wash her man's back and give him supper and bear him a child each year.

They were a haughty lot and their pride sprang in part from their skill, their indifference to danger, and the fact that once a miner was underground and working at the breast, no man was his boss. It was up to the miner to fire the shots, to use the most delicately exact skill in placing the timber. The work required an alert mind and great physical strength; the miner had them both and he was quite willing to admit it. The pitching coal veins made the work never the same; sometimes erect, sometimes on his knees, sometimes on his side or back, the miner worked in an endless night, a soft black velvet darkness, with only the light of his miner's lamp to see by. The mine enfolded these men in her dark embrace, and in return the miners gave her a strange devotion. They might war with the operator but they were wedded to coal and the mine. Blindness and broken backs, sudden death from gas or fire or rockfall, slow death from miner's consumption, or an asthmatic quaking old age-the prospect of none of these things could kill off their attachment. To see in 1939 a miner at a coal pile bend over and pick up a handful and then say "Beautiful stuff, beautiful stuff," is to get a stray flash of this feeling. In many ways these men were as intense individualists as ever lived; it was the mine that held them together.

Years before, they had stumbled toward the idea of a union (the first coal strike in America occurred near Shen-andoah in 1842), and the influence of the mine itself, the close interdependence of all who worked underground, served to make them act as one. It would be inaccurate to say that the miner's attitude toward the union resembled that of the Roman toward the citizenship, but the feeling invoked is as powerful and as subtle. To utter the word is to touch a vital nerve. The union may be hoary with age, may be racked with faction, officials may be corrupt, a miner's card may have lapsed years ago, he may be a stalwart or a renegade, he may be a judge on the bench after a slate picker's childhood, he may have quit the mines and the region—it makes no difference. Under all these ashes the idea of the union is still a live coal.

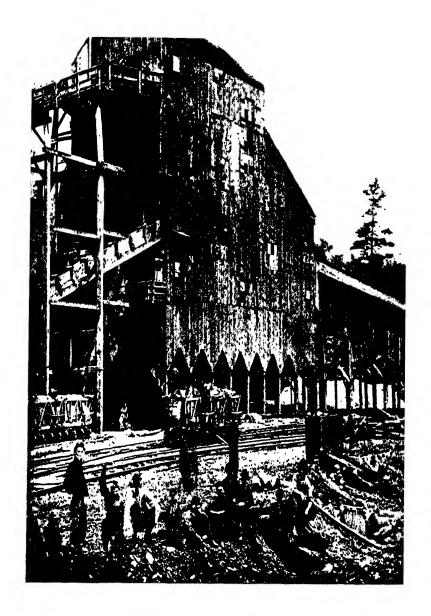
In 1864 a young miner of St. Clair, a coal town near by, began the first sustained effort to organize the miners. His name was John Siney. Irish-born, young, over six feet, magnetic, he achieved considerable success. Aided by the rise of war prices for coal, he built his forces, and when the inevitable slump came he was able to hold wages somewhere near in line. No more profound than Gowen, he did grasp the importance of economic pressure. It was with this man that Gowen now prepared to fight. The miners knew the fight was coming. An itinerant versifier of the day put it thus:

They met each night and discussed the news, Opinions gave and made comments Of the acts of Siney, Gowen, Grant, The three then ruling presidents. Yet racial feeling muddied the water and confused the miners. A young Irish miner, sparking his girl, might stop at Dillman's Garden on Main Street. A young Welsh miner is there with his girl also. A word, a look, a gibe, and a fight has started with glassware flying through the air, bystanders yelling, and gunplay or knives a possible finish. Shenandoah lived in the taut atmosphere of Deadwood or Virginia City during the gold rush. This state of affairs made Siney's progress with the union difficult. The Irish formed the most militant element, and this quality he valued, but he dreaded guerilla fights. The combination of race feeling, discrimination in the mines, wretched wages, and hot temper had already caused numbers of the Irish to start the fight against the operators on their own account.

3

Not many years before, an American branch of the fraternal Ancient Order of Hibernians—a benevolent society of the usual sort—had been set up in New York. This order in due time established lodges in the anthracite region, and from its Irish membership—it was later charged—there sprang still another organization which took on the mixed complexion of early Nihilist terrorists, a frontier vigilance committee, and Tammany Hall. They were known as the Molly Maguires, and Shenandoah was one of their strongholds.

It is sixty years since Franklin B. Gowen broke the Mollies and even now it is difficult to come at the truth about them. Nothing in our history quite parallels their career. It is significant, however, that to this day among the older Irish in the Shenandoah region the mere mention of the



5. A COAL BREAKER NEAR SHENANDOAH
The period is about 1900.



name calls forth reminiscence bitter as gall. The charge that the Mollies were connected with the Hibernians was never proved. The Mollies who were convicted and executed never confessed the murders of which they were accused. Much that was written at the time about them was vicious and distorted; in later years attempts have been made to present them as gallant heroes in the class struggle. Neither version is true. Careful investigation long ago led to the conclusion that if Gowen had been able to keep up his coal tonnage at low cost the "outrages" would not have bothered him. Life in the region was accustomed to violence and sudden death; terrible mine accidents were constant, so were saloon brawls and killings. But if Gowen could, by a campaign against the Mollies, involve Siney and the union, then his fight was won. And that is what happened.

This appears to be the story: In retaliation for discrimination in the mines, the Irish embarked on a violent course. The body of an English or Welsh mining boss would be found at the bottom of an abandoned shaft or a horse would turn in at a familiar house, reins in the dirt, the buggy empty, with the dead driver on the ground a mile away by a turn in the lonely road. Presently any violence would be laid at the door of the Mollies and the Irish. Things were at this stage when on the 10th of February, 1874, a young Irishman named James McKenna arrived in Shenandoah.

He found friends at Muff Lawler's saloon on Coal Street, presently became popular for his skill in rough-and-tumble fighting, his repertoire of songs, jigs, and breakdowns, and his capacity for rotgut whisky. Within two months Mc-Kenna became a member of the Mollies, taking oath on his knees in the presence of Lawler, the bodymaster of the

local chapter. He speedily proved his merit and became known in Shenandoah and the county as one of the most active of the Mollies.

Word would come from over the mountains that a mining boss was marked for death. Two strangers were wanted for the job. It was up to McKenna's organization or some other one in the valley to furnish the men. This exchange device was used to avoid recognition and increased the mystery that surrounded the Mollies.

At this moment-December, 1874-Gowen came to grips with Siney and his union. Previous struggles were only preliminaries; this was to be decisive. Gowen vowed that the union must be obliterated, and to that end set up the Coal and Iron Police and brought in Pinkerton men to officer them. One by one the mines at Shenandoah shut down; all work ceased. Day after day, week after week, month after month the feeling grew tighter and tighter in the dark, winter-blocked valley. There were outbreaks and on one occasion Shenandoah was in the possession of a mob. But there was a limit and hunger finally did its work; the miners' ranks wavered and broke and the strike collapsed. Siney, worn out with strain and disappointment, did not long survive; the union was broken. Gowen had spent, or so he said, four million dollars to do it. The ranks of the Coal and Iron Police-the Coalies-were kept intact and for more than a generation were a terror in the region.

But resistance was not quite over, for from the Mollies came one last convulsive effort. In September, 1875, a mining boss was killed just over the county line by two Mollies from Tamaqua, a town not far from Shenandoah. The Mollies fled over the hills, but they had been seen and recog-

nized, the news clicked off the wires at Tamaqua, and when bedraggled and soaked with perspiration they reached home they were seized, put aboard a coal train, and rushed back over the county line.

Then something very queer happened. When the Mollies were indicted and brought to trial the defense found that every day its moves had been anticipated. Somebody was giving information. The verdict was guilty in the first degree, and the panic of the Mollies turned into a rout. Going up to Girardville on the train, John Kehoe, the most influential Molly in the county, was beckoned aside by the conductor and told that McKenna, the secretary of the Shenandoah lodge, was a spy. Kehoe realized the Mollies' peril and demanded McKenna's instant death. Realizing his peril, McKenna vanished. Wholesale arrests waited only for a signal; it came. Captain Alderson, of the Coal and Iron Police, "strolled into the telegraph office" and sent this message to his men throughout the region: "Spring the trap."

Spring came on. The country was about to celebrate the centennial of its independence at Philadelphia, to announce to the world that America had come of age. The Corliss engine, the largest ever built, would prove our mechanical pre-eminence; the orchestra of Theodore Thomas and Patrick Gilmore's band would show that we had not neglected the arts. If any of the visitors to the exposition had wished to see at first hand an exhibit of our social progress they could have done so by taking a short ride from Philadelphia up to Pottsville. For there on the 4th of May, 1876, the Mollies were brought to trial.

From Shenandoah and all the other coal towns the miners and their wives and children came to crowd the courtroom.

There were many sensations but the greatest of all was provided by the president of the Philadelphia & Reading, Franklin B. Gowen, who appeared as chief counsel for the Commonwealth and put upon the stand James McKenna. His real name, it appeared, was McParlan; he was a Pinkerton detective. Three years before he had been hired by Gowen and sent into the region. He had joined the Mollies, become a bosom companion of many of them, a power in the organization; now he was to betray the whole wretched story of their hopeless, violent resistance.

On the bench were the presiding judge and his associates. Below was Mr. Gowen, resplendent in evening dress; on the stand was the detective. In cross-examination the lawyers for the defense asked the detective about a meeting at which the accused had arranged a murder. "Were there other persons present than those you have named?" asked the defense. "If so, who were they?" Mr. Gowen directed the witness not to answer the question. Being asked by the Court to state his reasons for this objection, he turned toward the crowded gallery and said: "We object, because the answer to this and similar questions might defeat the ends of justice. There are others besides these persons, some of whom are now present in this room-who ought to be, but are not yet, in the hands of the officers of the law. We object to giving them the notice which may enable them to escape!"

Only fragments of reminiscence recall the blind hatred with which the miners looked down at this man. Gowen, Gowen, forever Gowen. Wherever they turned Gowen stopped the way. A miner worked for Mr. Gowen in the mine, paid two prices at Mr. Gowen's stores, paid Mr.

Gowen rent, lived under the shadow of Mr. Gowen's police, and when he went to town rode on Mr. Gowen's railroad. The spy in their midst had been Mr. Gowen's agent working for Mr. Gowen's money, and when they were finally brought to trial, there was Mr. Gowen himself to demand vengeance upon them. When at last the trials were over and there were hangings in three county seats on a single day, Mr. Gowen's special trains were waiting at the station to carry away the bodies brought from the gallows in coffins "of the best material and workmanship." This was the price that Shenandoah paid in order that Mr. Gowen should get on in the world. They are paying for it yet.

There is a little more to say about Gowen. In the end he overreached himself; there were limits beyond which his glowing arguments could not carry him. The debt of the Reading mounted, the British bankers deserted him, there were two receiverships, and in '85 Gowen was forced out. He retired to private practice as a corporation lawyer and prospered. But something was wrong and on the 14th of December, 1889, he locked himself in a hotel room in Washington and put a bullet through his head. No reason for it was ever found, but the miners of Shenandoah made up a reason of their own and handed it down to their children-remorse!

4

Then the Slavs came. Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, Lithuanians, Russians, Croats—from the early eighties on they crowded in, straining the tight boundaries of the town to bursting.

Roundabout everything belonged to the operators who would not sell the surface land, so that in the town the houses pushed up closer and closer, almost on top of one another, and with mingled rage and bewilderment McShanes and Lloyds found Kovaleskis and Ancerawiczs squeezing up to their back fences.

Some were short, round-headed, and dark, some were tall blond giants; all were hardy types. Into a community where Welsh meetinghouses and Irish whisky-drinking wakes had been the rule, the Slavs, of both Greek and Latin faiths, brought their own customs. They built in Shenandoah the first Greek Catholic church in America. Once mass was over, they regarded Sunday as a holiday for rejoicing, lager drinking, love-making, and general excitement. "It was terrible," said a Baptist deacon; "saloons full blast, singing and dancing everywhere. It was Sodom and Gomorrah revived."

They needed what release they could find, for never were newcomers given less hospitable a reception, not even the Irish a generation before. The newspapers abused them, complaining of the "mixed population with which we are afflicted"; in Main Street stores they were laughed at when in broken, guttural-choked English they tried to buy; they were stoned and their children tormented. Says an observer of the time, they were "cuffed by jealous workmen and clubbed by greedy constables, exorbitantly fined by justices of the peace and unjustly imprisoned by petty officials; cheated of their wages and denied the rights of civilized men, driven to caves for shelter and housed in rickety shanties not fit to shelter cattle." But they survived; they

were told that this was the Land of Promise and they proposed to possess it.

They were given the poorest paid work in the mine (they had been brought as "cheap labor") and, aided partly by a powerful physique and partly by a stolid temperament, they held on. The experiences of the earliest comers are too grisly to recall. Such rigors killed the babies off like flies and brutalized many of the older ones. It is evidence of the bravery of these people that they got through it somehow and preserved in many an exuberant joy in living and a moving sweetness of character. They picked the huckleberries on the mountains behind Shenandoah, they were industrious gardeners and raised onions, cabbages, and potatoes. They kept pigs and made pickles, they consumed quantities of cheese. They were deliberate and careful-save when drunk when they fought like maniacs-and they watched what other people did. By degrees they got their mining papers. Not for them the easygoing ways of the Irish; the Slavs were so careful of the blasting powder, for which they had to pay so exorbitant a price, that they measured out each shot by the spoonful and then carefully saved the powder kegs.

Once, on the Fourth of July, there was a parade. A cask of lager was mounted on a wagon and hung with leaves. Over the cask leaned a young fellow with a garland of oak leaves round his neck and a goblet in his hand. Sitting down in the wagon was another young buck playing the accordion. Behind came the rest in force, parading for a block and then stopping to tap the cask. There were weddings that sometimes lasted three or four days, with dancing all night long, pitching coins in dishes to make a wedding por-

tion for the bride. Slowly, like the building up of a coral reef, these people put together a civilization. Against almost every obstacle that could be devised they pitted themselves and somehow got round it.

They displayed an extraordinary mimicry. In the schools the children excelled the English and the Irish in drawing and penmanship and mathematics; they were obedient but determined. The Slavs found the price of citizenship hoisted through the efforts of lawyers who saw easy pickings in this horde of newcomers and they met the legal fraternity on their own ground. The Slavs organized into political clubs and laboriously prepared for examination. Then they made bargains, agreeing to support the candidate who got them their naturalization. By 1900 almost two-thirds of Shenandoah was Slavic. In 1891 none of the twelve members of the City Council was Slav; in 1902 five of them were. By the turn of the century they had elected a Polish burgess. They quarreled with no institution; they simply observed the institution carefully and then proceeded to absorb it, corruption and all.

In the end it was the mines that began to break down the barricades of jealousy and suspicion. When little Bratt Michalochik was killed, his coffin was followed through the streets by a silent procession of breaker boys; and English and Irish women, who had watched their own children borne through Shenandoah on the same terrible journey, would for an instant crowd close to the numb and bewildered mother. When the alarm whistle blew, the terror-stricken women fled to the mine together and forgot the hatred as they pressed against the ropes, waiting hour after hour for news from below. When at last the cage rose to the surface

and one by one the bodies were lifted off, all bitterness dissolved. Whatever they may have been in life, in death there was no difference between George Skollar, Mike Brannan, and Jesse Brill. But perhaps the greatest single influence that united the miners of Shenandoah was a man—perhaps it would be more accurate to say a name—John Mitchell.

5

How shall we unwrap the winding sheet of legend from Mitchell and find out what he really was? The dates are simple enough and can be stated thus: John Mitchell, coal miner, born Braidwood, Illinois, 1870. In 1898, at twenty-eight, elected vice-president of the United Mine Workers of America. On the resignation of his superior, succeeded to the presidency in the same year. Thereafter re-elected annually until 1908, when at thirty-eight he retired and severed active connection with the miners. Died 1919, age forty-nine. Buried near Scranton. But none of these dates nor the documents either will explain the mystery of the man or make clear the doubts and torments of his troubled soul. In youth he was a thundering success; he died before he was fifty, frustrated and embittered. Why?

His memory is fading in Shenandoah, but among the middle-aged and the older miners, especially the Slavs, there is power in the name. With them Mitchell is remembered as still young—slender, dark, and handsome, with pale face and long black coat like a priest—just as he was when they first saw him. They have forgotten or never knew his frustration and his failures, they do not recall the bitter attacks. His name is spoken with emotion, sometimes even with tears.

Johnny. Father. Johnny d'Mitch. The man has become a myth. They would still say, as a delegation of Slav miners said to him long ago: "Blessed be the day . . . when you came amongst us."

For in the end the Slavs—like the English and the Irish—met one wall they could not surmount—the coal operators. All real resistance had ended when Gowen broke the strike of '75; other attempts to organize failed, the flurry of the Knights of Labor passed over and was gone. The miners lived in a sort of twilight. It was during these years that incidents accumulated that subsequently were to arouse and astound the country: the adventures of Andrew Chippie, twelve years old, whose pay of forty cents a day was credited against the debt of his father who had been killed in a mine accident; of James Gallagher, who worked for seventeen years and six months and never drew a cent of cash pay.

Meantime the Philadelphia & Reading had been going through a series of tortuous reorganizations. In 1901 George Baer—appointed counsel in 1870, the first year of Gowen's administration—became president. A dark man, with mustache and pointed beard and "almond eyes, like those of an Oriental," Baer was said to be more like Morgan than any other man with whom the banker associated. Baer esteemed himself as a scholar, as an authority on the history of Pennsylvania, and on occasion spoke at dinners. He was especially eloquent when he touched the sacred theme of the civil liberties and their debt to the reformed church.

Actually an intense and ruthless reactionary, he all but controlled an entire industry and one that was almost ossified in organization. The whole financial structure of the business was a crazy maze; the wage scales a conflict of contradictions. Not only were wages different in different collieries, but miners working side by side would earn different pay. In the mines of the other operators the situation was identical. The result of this hopeless confusion was to drive wages to the bottom or, as the saying went, "to mine the miners." Affairs had reached this pass, when in 1899 the convention of the United Mine Workers—representing the bituminous fields almost altogether—voted to organize the anthracite, and directed their young president to start the work. It wasn't altruism. Every time the soft-coal miners struck, an available supply of anthracite was a threat to their success.

As outriders, two able and energetic lieutenants, John Fahy and Miles Dougherty, went through the region in advance spying out the land. Then Mitchell himself came. The problem of combining Welsh, Irish, and Slav was staggering, so bitter was the feeling. It was solved thus: the English-speaking miners would have to carry on the work among themselves; Mitchell's own time was given to the Slavs. Day after day he made his way slowly through the region, explaining, explaining, explaining. Old Poles would listen open-mouthed. This youth sat down in their kitchens, he talked in their churches, he held meetings in the fields. In the gangway and at the breast the men talked of Mitchell all day long. When he came to Locust Gap, over the mountain from Shenandoah, the breaker boys crowded at his heels and caused such disturbance that the fathers ordered them home. This was a meeting for miners, for men not children. But Mitchell would not allow it; everyone who worked in a mine was in the same boat, no contract miner was more important than a slate picker. The response to this was an almost hysterical devotion from the boys. If you want to

see how far this could go, go down to the anthracite and talk to some of the men who were slate pickers then.

The operators regarded this agitation with a glacial silence; there was no recognition of Mitchell, they were convinced that racial bitterness among the miners would make combination impossible. They were mistaken. A convention ordered the men out on the 17th of September, 1900, and with their hearts in their mouths, with twenty-five years of failure behind them, the men struck. The strike lasted six weeks, while Mark Hanna, who was running the Full Dinner Pail campaign for McKinley's re-election, grew more and more alarmed. Finally, in New York, Morgan spoke, and throughout the anthracite the operators posted about the breakers new terms that met the miners' revised demands. The men went back to work on the 29th of October; to this day the 29th is known as Mitchell Day and is a holiday throughout the anthracite.

Resumption of work was not the settlement of a strike but a truce. With all speed the operators set about erecting stockades for the storage of coal; an elaborate spy system was installed in the mines. The national organization of the miners had authorized a strike if Mitchell failed to get a conference with the operators, and when at last the will of the Reading was known, when Baer informed Mitchell that anthracite mining was "a business, not a religious, sentimental, or academic proposition," Mitchell ended the truce. "The time for action has arrived," he told the convention. There was no excitement in Wall Street. John W. "Bet-A-Million" Gates, after a conversation with Morgan, offered to bet one hundred to one against a strike. But there was plenty of excitement in Shenandoah; more than Mitchell, it was the

miners who relentlessly pushed on. On May 15, 1902, the great anthracite strike began. To people elsewhere it meant scareheads and a rise in the price of coal. To Shenandoah it was Gettysburg in their back yards.

6

Early one morning Mrs. Krupa was in her parlor on her knees before an image of the Virgin, praying for the success of the strike. She was alone; all of her men were out on the picket line. Looking out of the window, she saw two men stealthily making their way up the street. Scabs on the way to the colliery! Like one possessed she rushed from the house, screaming at the men at the top of her lungs and calling upon a mythical crowd of miners in her house to hurry out and deal with the foul wretches. The men took one look at Mrs. Krupa, another at the house, and fled; the lady returned to her devotions. There were hundreds like her in Shenandoah, more determined, if that was possible, about the strike than the men. Mrs. McCann, who had cause to doubt her husband's fortitude, kept his clothes in the washtub all the time lest he yield to temptation and try to go back to work.

The parades were constant. "We are slaves now but Mitchell will set us free" said the banners. The Slavs, less excited than the others, had one eye on the calendar. It might be a long time before this fight was over. They cultivated their garden patches and their wives combed the mountains behind the town for huckleberries. Then the money began to run out.

The bituminous miners had promised large sums, but it was slow in coming. The great question was: Should the bituminous miners—and they represented the great bulk of the United Mine Workers—come out and thus tie up most of the coal in the country? It was debated furiously by the miners. They were getting hungry and their children hungrier. Once again they convened, and Mitchell argued that money was more important than a general strike, that the soft-coal miners must keep their contracts. It was a narrow squeeze but he was sustained. Huge sums were assessed on the soft-coal men to supply the anthracite war chest.

In Shenandoah the miners waited anxiously for Mitchell's coming. You may see him in the old photographs, riding up Main Street toward the vacant lot where he was to speak. Overhead, stretched across the street, is a huge banner: "Welcome to Our National President, Ino. Mitchell." On the sidewalks the people are jammed. The hero rides in a barouche with John Fahy-hero No. 2 with sweeping mustaches-beside him; there are cockades in the horses' bridles. there is a brass band-though you can't see it in the picturesand beside the barouche, crowding close on either side, are the breaker boys, washed and scrubbed, in caps and knee pants. This pale-faced man belonged to them; they worked for a living at the mines, and this being descended from heaven, this man so close that they could touch him, had been a miner also; he was theirs! The cheers, they say, were hysterical; miners and their wives, some of them, sobbing with emotion. So the myth was made and the statue hoisted to its pedestal. Weary, tormented with doubt, the melancholy end of John Siney never far from his thoughts, Mitchell stood on the rude platform looking out over the crowd and urged them to take heart and stand firm. Then it was time to go on to the next coal town and the next and the next and the next.

When he was gone the roused emotions subsided before the blunt fact of an empty pantry and children weakening under short rations and the terrific heat. Things grew steadily worse, feeling more bitter. Troops were already patrolling the region. Washington was roused; Henry Cabot Lodge got uneasy about the State elections in Massachusetts; there were more conferences in Wall Street. The Roman Church for the most part supported the strike; it was difficult to do otherwise when entire parishes were picketing. Feeling in Shenandoah was screwed tighter and tighter. Then the storm broke.

One night late in July, Joseph Beddal, a local hardware merchant, tried to smuggle firearms into the Reading Station where a deputy and two scabs were besieged. The fury of the miners, so long restrained, broke all bounds. They set upon the man with clubs and beat him to death. Then the town boiled over—became, in effect, half crazed—and troops were sent for. For the first time since the Mollies, Shenandoah was on the front page of every daily newspaper. Mitchell exhorted the men to stand firm, no matter what the provocation. But how long, how long? By August morale was sinking fast. If, at that moment, the operators had opened the mines, the strike would have collapsed. But the moment passed and then a small thing helped to turn the tide. It was a letter.

In July a man named Clark had written to President Baer,

urging him to settle the strike. Baer replied, and in August his letter was made public:

Philadelphia and Reading Railway Company President's Office Reading Terminal, Philadelphia

My dear Mr. Clark:

I have your letter of the 15th instant.

I do not know who you are. I see that you are a religious man; but you are evidently biased in favor of the right of the working man to control a business in which he has no other interest than to secure fair wages for the work he does.

I beg of you not to be discouraged. The rights and interests of the laboring man will be protected and cared for—not by the labor agitators, but by the Christian men to whom God in his infinite wisdom has given the control of the property interests of this country, and upon the successful management of which so much depends.

Do not be discouraged. Pray earnestly that right may triumph, always remembering that the Lord God Omnipotent still reigns and that his reign is one of law and order and not of violence and crime.

Yours truly, Geo. F. Baer, President.

The publication of the letter was followed by a chorus of hoots and catcalls from all over the country; from then on feeling grew steadily for the miners. Winter was coming and coal in New York was \$20 a ton. Finally, on the 13th of October, Morgan and Robert Bacon went to the White House to announce the capitulation of the operators; they would arbitrate. Many of the miners were loath to consent. They had their second wind now and were ready to fight to a finish, but Mitchell refused. They had agreed to accept arbitration; now they had it. In convention once more, the





8. FOR THE MINERS' GODS ARE MIGHTY GODS

John Llewellyn Lewis, President of the United Mine Workers of America and of the C. I. O., at the 1938 Mitchell Day celebration at Mt. Carmel, a few miles from Shenandoah. The holiday is celebrated throughout the region and commemorates the surrender of the anthracite coal operators on October 29, 1900, when the anthracite miners, under John Mitchell, won their first victory.

miners upheld his decision, and on the night of October 21st a thousand breaker boys with burning lamps paraded the streets of Shenandoah in celebration of the victory. Two days later the miners went back to work and the strike of 1902 was over.

It was over, and in one sense Mitchell was all done also. At thirty-two he had reached the summit of his fame and from then on it was a long, slow decline until death. With the miners at the point of desperation, Mitchell had caught them up when the country was going through a wave of prosperity. The man's youth and brilliance met their opportunity. He was as much an anomaly among the potbellied horse-trading labor leaders as he was among the businessmen and the bankers who did business with those leaders. Sensitive, introspective, without appetite for controversy, he depended almost wholly on his own resources. There was a druggist in Scranton whom he could trust with his friendship; there were a few others. He never ceased to feel the lack of "education" and would patiently listen while an assistant read aloud to him. As each book was finished Mitchell would write on the flyleaf, "Read," and put it on the shelf with the rest. Year by year, after the first successes, his problems became more complicated and onerous. His policy in the Colorado coal strike was bitterly attacked. He began to drink hard, not for pleasure, but to blunt the gnawings of his bitterness and doubt. Once at a convention of the Mine Workers the opening session waited and waited for their president; the miners never knew that Mitchell had drunk himself into a stupor and, on being roused, cried out over and over again: "I can't face them, I can't face

them." At last, worn out at thirty-eight, he threw up the sponge and quit.

Afterward, in his last years, he used to go down alone to walk in the slums of New York, fearful lest he lose association and understanding with the poor. But the times were out of joint, he was bewildered and tired, he had neither philosophy nor flaming vision to sustain him. The way grew darker and darker; brooding, confused, and embittered, far from the miners to whom in sentiment he was always bound, he died suddenly in 1919.

A startled country discovered that Mitchell had left behind him a quarter of a million dollars, accumulated, apparently, through speculation during the war. It was the last hopeless irony of Mitchell's life. The money had given him slight satisfaction; it blighted the memory of his best years. Radicals, who had always fought him bitterly, charged that the money was loot gained in betrayal of the miners. No evidence to support this has been found. At the height of his power Mitchell was called an incendiary and a revolutionist. The truth was that he was an extreme conservative; he reiterated his belief that capital and labor could lie down together. His powers of analysis were not deep, but he was honest and a hard worker and his heart was with the miners. He simply wanted them "to get their share." Beyond this he could not go, either in understanding or in will. He went as far as he could and then stopped-forever, eaten in his heart by the knowledge that something was wrong with his success and that for him there was no answer. But the old miners of Shenandoah will not tell you this; the gold on the hero's image may be dim but it is not defaced.

7

The victory of the miners in 1902 was not a clean sweep, but it was a great victory none the less. They made substantial gains, and one thing the strike did do: it institutionalized the conflict that had been going on for two generations; it became an established union pitted against the operators. With some changes that is the state of affairs today. Underneath all the surface life of Shenandoah has been the restless moving back and forth of these forces.

For the most part the racial bitterness has gone—it was the Slavs who went through 1902 like iron men, and nobody forgot it-though division lines are still faintly shown. "The Russian people," says a Pole, "are giving a dance over at Kulpmont." To look at Shenandoah now is like seeing a great stratified cliff, with layer upon layer of races and bloods laid down by succeeding waves of immigration. Viewed chronologically, this cliff shows at the bottom a layer of English, Welsh, and German stocks. Next above comes a broad belt of Irish; and on the top, a huge stratum of Russians, Poles, and Lithuanians and their descendants, the bulk of the town. Sprinkled upon this sedimentary formation are a few Spanish and Portuguese, the last arrivals of all. Upon this cliff the influence of the mine and the miners' interests and associations have acted with volcanic pressure and have mixed and mingled the bloods.

If the business community regards the miners with some condescension, it is returned with interest; the miner's pride is often awe-inspiring. If there is anything in the belief that "get the hell out of my way" is an American trait, then the

miner has it in large. At a district convention of his union, a miner's proper credentials were not recognized by an official who didn't like him. The delegate settled this promptly by tearing the shirt and collar off the official; tactics of this kind pleased the other delegates, gave savor to the session, and disposed of the credentials question. It is fair to say that the instinct to take a sock is in the blood. Once aroused, a miner generally proceeds to action and it isn't strange that his industrial disputes have been bloody; he and his kind are not disposed to lie down. In Shenandoah, it is true, since 1902 strikes have been peaceful for the most part. The mines shut down and nobody works until some agreement has been reached.

The miners have been called sentimental and it is true; they admire handsome men and like florid oratory. They esteem themselves highly as lovers and as stallions. "Yes," says the old miner, "there was more to the miner's saying 'weak in the head and strong in the back' than you might suppose." Occasionally they curse their work and say they long to be aboveground and they mean it; but drop some pitying word as a bait, and they rise fiercely to a defense of their calling. They and their families have been subject to an unconscionable amount of religious superstition, but no more so than the New Englanders or the settlers of the Middle West. As persons, as human beings, they rank very high. The combative instinct has given a sting and a high color to their character; they have added a powerful strain to our blood and an intensely moving chapter to our history.

They have often been called the only true proletarians in America; if the word includes a political implication it is scarcely true. They have been acutely conscious of the gulf

between them and the operators and have faced it without much illusion. Says an old headstone:

> Forty years I worked with pick and drill Down in the mines against my will The Coal King's slave but now it's passed Thanks be to God I am free at last.

The miners may have been baffled and defeated but over a stretch of a hundred years they learned that protection and a chance for a decent life meant a fight with the operators. The final divorce between the Reading Railway and the Coal and Iron Company ordered by the Supreme Court did not substantially alter conditions in the mines around Shenandoah. Yet although from early days there has been a revolutionary wing to the miners as a body, it is still just a wing. The miners had no Debs. Mother Jones-with small philosophy and less politics-conforms more closely to the type of militant miner than perhaps any of their leaders. She kept close to earth, knew injustice when she saw it, and white-haired, with umbrella and reticule, sailed into battle at once. To her, miners were "mighty fine fellows" and the enemy "sewer rats whose names I didn't charge my mind with." Of the miners' leaders Mitchell may be taken as a fair norm, raised to its high pitch. The coal diggers have been, in fact, belligerent democrats.

So large a body of men confined to so small a region is bound to exert pressure politically. Candidates made promises; the miners themselves served demands on officeholders. As early as 1868 the miners got an eight-hour law passed at Harrisburg, only to have it emasculated in the process. Through their demands a quantity of legislation has been put on the books of Pennsylvania and much of it has been

well honored in the breach. Failure here threw the miners back on the union and direct action. Their faith still rests with the union—or a union, and this faith has had to stand a terrific beating. They often admit themselves that they "are good strikers and bad union men." They will go into action with much enthusiasm and small thought; failure brings a howl for a scapegoat. More than one local leader has stood up to fight for the men against either the national union officers or the operators, only to be deserted and repudiated by the miners themselves. Yet still they stumble on.

Time has done strange things to the United Mine Workers. It is still the largest union in the country and until the advent of the C.I.O. was one of the few American industrial unions-everyone who works in and about a mine, miners, mule drivers, brattice men, engineers, pumpmen, and all, belong to the same organization. Organization requires a hierarchy of officials and with the passage of years the union has become a complicated political structure, racked with faction and as susceptible to corruption as any other political or business organization. Compromise begins the moment a miner leaves the local for the district or national office; dealing directly with the operators gives an official many an opportunity to work for his own advantage. Where once in the pioneer days their president was Mitchell, the crusader, now it is John Llewellyn Lewis, an ambitious, hardriding labor politician and administrator. In the past he has suppressed opposition without scruple and has been bitterly hated for it. His rise to national influence and his position as president of the Congress for Industrial Organization has taken some of the edge off this hatred. Lewis, they say, is a great man now.

But the miners are now beset with the greatest problem of all—the decline in the coal industry. Unlike soft coal, anthracite has no by-products, unless gas can be called one. Years of mismanagement and the competition of other fuels have done their work; miners have lost their jobs. Mechanization and the introduction of strip mining added to the number of jobless miners. From a production of 90 million tons of anthracite in 1925, demand fell to 73 million in four years. By 1937 it had fallen to less than 51 million tons, not far from where it was in 1890. "In 1935, on their own showing, the working capital of companies producing from 90 to 95% of the total output was only nine million dollars! This is a decline from seventy millions in 1929 and from one hundred and eleven millions in 1926."

Where there were 175,000 anthracite miners in 1920, in 1936 there were but 99,500. There has never been, at any time, steady work in the mines; often a miner could work but half the days in a year, and in recent years the average has plunged down even from this. Shenandoah is falling in population because of these pressures and from 24,000 in 1920 had lost 3,000 inhabitants by 1930. Though some life is breathing in the business, it is a halting breath.

It is this state of affairs which accounts for the thousands of crude shafts and miniature coal mines of the anthracite bootleggers which have dotted the hillsides of Schuylkill County near Shenandoah in the past five years. A half-dozen men or less, with jerry-built equipment, mine these little holes for coal on company land. Truckers carry it away to the cities for sale. This general breakdown, among other things, actually sets the bootlegging miners against those who still find work in the collieries and makes even more

uncertain the miner's future. If it had not been for bootlegging and relief, wretched as those resources have been, thousands in the anthracite would have starved.

Many of them will never work again. Underneath Shenandoah and other towns of the region lie millions of tons of coal—energy—and no town can be said to have lost its future while that energy is still there. But the future is bleak enough now. The obvious step—nationalization of the mines—has been debated, argued, and discussed for years. It waits upon history for realization. In 1938 the Anthracite Coal Industry Commission after contemplating the problem could only hope for State regulation of the industry. But there are thousands of miners, some of them in Shenandoah, who can't very well wait upon history for a solution of their troubles. By that time they may be dead. In what direction will they turn?

Since the miners, for the most part, have been content to follow the old political paths without much question, it is possible that they may lend as attentive an ear to a demagogue as other Americans, and take it even more quickly to heart, considering their instinct for action. One thing may put a brake on this: For three generations they have had to deal collectively and in person with the dismal science of economics. They have had a lot of practice in learning about and trying to control the machinery of their livelihood—sellouts, blunders, short sight, graft, and betrayal included.

There is, at Pottsville, the countyseat, a horel, called the Necho Allen after the man who is supposed to have discovered anthracite. This hotel has a Coal Mine Taproom. One section of the wall represents the mouth of a gangway with a car piled with coal emerging into the taproom. Part of

the wall is mine-timbered and all about are scattered mining tools, carbide lamps, and other paraphernalia. The side walls of the booths are fitted with handsome photographic murals which show the begrimed miner at work. And at the tables—the linen is very heavy and the silver glitters—sit the elect of Pottsville, making the cocktail hour something more than an excuse for a drink. The waiters are alert; the bartender is bland, and the Martinis excellent.

Nor are the guests drab. There is a woman in a coral dress with a black astrakhan coat flung over her chair. In one corner is a young chap in blue flannels drinking with a girl who wears a pale-green wool sport outfit and moccasins. Two gray-haired bulky men with old-fashioned gold cable watch-chains straining across their paunches, are drinking highballs. There is a gray-haired woman, a little touched up, with a young man and both are pretty drunk. When the woman waves her hands at the murals her bracelets jangle. She says that the young man won't see anything like this anywhere, and that is quite true. She says the mines are simply fascinating. And they are. There are no murals of the general offices of the Philadelphia and Reading Coal & Iron Company nor is the chairman of the board shown dictating a letter. No, there are only miners, only Maxeys and McShanes and Kalvaruskis and Brazzeses make up this odd gallery of heroes. Heroes? How uneasy, how uncomfortable these people would be if a crowd of such heroes should suddenly enter the taproom and sit down. Why, then, the murals on the walls, what is the strange power that the miners have over the imaginations of these people? Someone ought to explain this mystery, this furtive vicarious blood transfusion. But no explanation is offered on the cocktail list;

there's only some publicity writer's blurb about Necho Allen.

But meantime, over the mountain in Shenandoah, the housewives are raising hell about the price of meat and giving out blistering statements in reply to the charge that they are ignorant foreigners. Some young miners are in the New York Lunch arguing about a dance, and the blackboard next door says that Ellengowan will not work tomorrow, and old Gladski, getting up from his chair in the kitchen, looks out at the dark culm piles in the distance with the mist curling up over their crests . . . and Gowen, the suicide, is dead and Siney sleeps on his hillside overlooking St. Clair, and Muff Lawler, the bodymaster of Shenandoah is dead and McParlan, the spy, is dead and George Baer is dead along with his after-dinner apostrophes to Civil Liberry, and Mitchell, the adored, the lost and defeated Mitchell, is dead. But John Lewis is alive and the office of the Philadelphia and Reading Coal & Iron Company is still open for business and in Shenandoah the young miners wrestle with the problems inherited from their fathers and their grandfarhers. And above them the wild and darkened mountains look down as they did in the days when the place was a silent wilderness, a hummock on the valley floor.

## II

## LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

## AN AMERICAN MUSEUM PIECE

"Too many people have the vote."

-Milton Hannibal Smith, President of the
Louisville & Nashville Railroad

T OUISVILLE, KENTUCKY, is a museum piece among Ameri-L can cities. There, as under glass, the curious may see memorials of the "American system" in its purest form, monuments of individualist enterprise. There change came deliberately and, when it did come, disguised and hid itself in the forms familiar to a town whose palmy days were during its years of growth beside the falls of the Ohio, when it was a metropolis of the great valley, a rival of Cincinnati, the Queen City of the West, a nerve center of a young country. If you come down Indiana on a warm May morning you will reach the river at last, the muddy Ohio, and there on the other side, all hazy and heaped up, is Louisville. There are some green trees, dusty in the haze, and above are white thunderheads piling up in the blue sky. The train crawls out on the bridge. Down below, on the shore, are some men and boys fishing with bamboo poles. Then the haze dissolves and the city materializes in an old red-brick jumble. There she is on the riverbank, Louisville, the city of Let Well Enough Alone.

Fourth Street begins at the Ohio River. It's only eight blocks from there to the Brown Hotel—built during the boom of the twenties—but those eight blocks cover almost a hundred and fifty years. The riverside paving shelves down to the water's edge with iron rings set in the stone at intervals. Before the Civil War, when traffic glutted the canal around the falls, when there were packet steamers running on regular schedule between Louisville and Liverpool and you could buy a passenger ticket for Havana, direct, this was a busy place. But not now. In the soft spring night the water slaps against the stone, the lights of Jeffersonville on the Indiana side are blurred, the place is deserted except for a couple of kids necking in a Ford drawn up near the water's edge.

The street climbs, as it recedes from the river, with huge crumbling flagstone steps in place of sidewalks. Here and there a dim light reveals a bar; in one doorway two old men are smoking in silence. The place is like a tomb. At the first intersection is Main Street, once the great thoroughfare. Those battered columns are the front of what once, ages gone, was a branch of Nicholas Biddle's United States Bank. "The proportions of this portico are those of the temple of Bacchus at Toes," says the City Directory of 1832, "but differs materially in the form of its members." Now the windows are bleared and there's a drunk asleep on the crumbling steps. Away off somewhere you can hear a street-car banging along in the dark. Many of these buildings are of great beauty, even in decay, limestone with classic cornices and carved stone balustrades. Where once the tobacco

factors had their offices, where the linen-clad planters from the deep South came to do business, there is now storage for plumbers' supplies, warerooms of candy jobbers, coffee roasters, and pants and cap makers. Not far from the bank, in an abandoned store building, is the Socialist reading room—locked up—with an old May Day poster still stuck in the window. Socialism has had a slow time in Louisville—despite or because of the tradition of low wages—and communists scarcely exist save in the imagination of the American Legion and the ivory-skulled business and legal lights.

As you move up Fourth Street you pass a generation almost with every block, the streets more brightly lit as you approach the center of the town. Two years ago it was all dark and still with muddy water lapping at the doors of the Brown Hotel. For twenty days after January 15, 1937, the town was at the mercy of the Ohio River with half the city under water and thousands fleeing for their lives. But that is over and gone now; it's the night before the Derby, and the street is jammed. In front of the Seelbach Hotel at Fourth and Walnut it is almost impossible to move. The sidewalk is littered with paper and dozens of newsboys are screaming racing editions of the Louisville Times. The Cincinnati Enquirer has a boy in special costume, all blue and orange. All the bars are going; the Seelbach has several. One of these is a small circular room that opens directly on the street. A girl in white organdie, wearing a scarlet jockey cap, is hanging over the bar very drunk. Two men in white duck are bent over a racing sheet, another is asking the bartender when the Honorable James A. Farley will arrive. The lobby here and at the Brown Hotel is crowded to suffocation with politicians and sporting gentry. On the Seelbach steps is a gray-haired bluegrass farmer holding a little boy by the hand. There are hundreds of men on the sidewalk, all looking alike, in wrinkled tan or gray Palm Beach suits, bulging at the belly, with tan felt hats, chewed cigars, and rumpled shirts sweaty at the collar. One of them, looking up at the hotel's old-fashioned, heavily ornamented façade: "Yes, sir, I seen 'em. I was upstairs and the door was wide open. Pie-eyed, all three of 'em, and the girl as naked as a jay."

Down the block the Kentucky Colonels have been having a dinner and a crowd of melted stiff shirts are pouring out. Two men from Detroit, mechanics in a ball bearing works, are watching a girl in a mandarin coat red her lips. "Yuh, that John L. Lewis is some man, what I mean. Buddy, we're going to the armory. There's a fight there tonight." A solemn-looking youth with high cheekbones and a cowlick says: "You see, this has always been an open shop town. Labor's been dead, just no nerve at all, and the craft offices are only places for the old skates to warm their cans. The Amalgamated Clothing Workers are here, but there's not much for them any more and they haven't got more'n a hundred and fifty members. This year the workers have waked some and what's been done has mostly been by themselves. None of the organizers from outside have been much good and it's been a rocky time. But steel's coming along pretty fair and you can bet the screws are being put on the men too. Up to now the Manufacturers' Association have had things their own way here."

Above the crowd and the lights the old brick and limestone buildings look down on the narrow street, a very rich street it has been and looks so still. Barney Macauley's

theater, one of the most famous roadstands in America, is gone now, but the mansard-towered Post Office Building stands as a sentinel of the past. The Brown Hotel with its mirror-ceilinged Bluegrass Room, is the final splendor of local enterprise, for the absentee landlord has appeared in both manufacture and local trade. Tobacco and distilling are traditional industries in Louisville; the old tobacco market is gone and local tobacco manufacture is controlled in New York. Seventy per cent of the whisky distilled in Louisville is controlled by absentees. The old-established family businesses with their low wages and exploited labor still hold on, but they are giving place to exploitation from a distance. Where James B. Brown, the resplendent promoter and banker and boss of the State held court during the boom and in twelve years did not go farther from Louisville than Cincinnati or French Lick, one Louisville bank is now owned in New York City. Counting hotels and theaters, there are 178 retail establishments facing the five principal blocks on Fourth Street and 106 of them are run by chains.

Two blocks away from Fourth and Walnut is the Negro center of the town, flanked by an apartment and office building, put up by a colored insurance company, and the Central Drug Store, consolidated clearinghouse for information. That young man with a dead pan, dressed in gray with a Panama hat, is a Negro lieutenant of one of the local bosses. The old-time flavor is gone. Few indeed remember Boss Whallen with his diamond studs; in November, 1938, Whallen's successor, Mike Brennan, breathed his last at Hot Springs. Most of the political fraternity are now celebrating the Derby and all in good time they will be borne away to a Turkish bath to have the liquor sweated out of them.

Times are slowly changing. A few of the Negroes get some of the pickings now; a Negro from Louisville sits in the legislature and the Democrats, at long last, are taking then in. Since North and South meet in Louisville the more in tense forms of race conflict are missing, but the very blurring of the line serves only to make more bitter the intolerable injustice put upon a helpless people.

To understand Louisville it is necessary to recall a num ber of factors. Settled originally by English, Irish, Scotch and African stocks who either trailed in the wake of George Rogers Clark or came over the Virginia mountains, this population base—save for an influx of Germans beginning be fore the Civil War-has remained almost unchanged. The great immigration waves did not touch the region. The position of the town beside the falls was of decisive importance. In the days of river traffic, cargo had to break bull there, and the merchants of Louisville levied toll on shippers, became shippers themselves and suppliers of shippers Around about lay a rich agricultural country. Finally, it was in the middle; it lay between the old East and the Western wilderness, between the North and the South, a city of middlemen, acutely conscious of what transportation meant, taking tithe of every traveler.

To Louisville came the Southern planters to buy—on 365 days' time—cotton gins, sugar mills, pork, hay, and flour Out of Louisville, northbound, went sugar, molasses, coffee and cotton. It was a brokers' paradise, a countinghouse towr where even the naturalist Audubon was pressed into service as a storekeeper and the brother of the poet John Keats was the director of a bank. Wealth accumulated and the wealth flowered out in a commercial civilization and the most com-

placent self-esteem in America. A preoccupation with percentages, an intensive interest in factional politics and the minutiae of litigation were characteristics of the town. The ruling-class women leaned heavily upon "charm"; there was due attention to food and drink. For the rest, let well enough alone.

How did this come to pass? Something may be revealed by a consideration of the lives of three citizens of Louisville. The first is James Guthrie, who was born in 1792; the second is Milton Hannibal Smith, who died in 1921; the third is James B. Brown, who is still alive. The first was a figure of national influence, an astute banker, promoter, and manipulator in the days of westward expansion. The second administered a great corporation that came to exert an overshadowing power and control over the city and the region. The third was the banker and promoter who took Louisville through the long speculative carouse of the twenties.

2

James Guthrie was twenty-eight years old when, about 1820, he came up from Bardstown, Kentucky, to be commonwealth attorney in Louisville, a little river town of four thousand inhabitants. The panic of the year before had somewhat taken the edge off President Monroe's era of good feeling, but despite this the place was booming. Fulton had already built a steamboat at Pittsburgh and sent it down the Ohio to Louisville, and young Henry Shreve, who smashed the Mississippi monopoly granted to Fulton and Livingston, had reached Louisville upstream from New Orleans. The

river swarmed with craft of every kind: rafts, flatboats, keelboats, and steamers. The promise of riches was in the air.

Guthrie was a curious combination of arrogance and caution. For three years he had been kept abed by a wound in the leg, the result of a duel, and the fact did not soften his irascibility. He was a lame man all his life. But he was shrewd and a calculator. One result of the panic had been the wreck of a multitude of canal and turnpike stock companies that had mushroomed through the West. It so happened, however, that a number of these macadam pikes in Kentucky and Tennessee were about completed when the bubble burst.

Some of these pikes led straightaway from Louisville to the South and enormously improved the town's position for trade. This did not escape Guthrie, and as time went on his activity as a lawyer declined and his efforts as a promoter increased. It would appear that his thought divided somewhat like this:

- with the addition of each artery of communication the prosperity of the town must increase. This automatically will increase the value of real estate. Guthrie with caution invested in Louisville property and laid the basis for a great fortune.
- 2. The control of these arteries—land and water—is important. Guthrie set himself to achieve such control.
- 3. To co-ordinate these enterprises effectively a good bank is essential. Guthrie became a banker.
- 4. It costs money to construct these works. Cannot government put its money into them? As an officeholder and legislator, Guthrie undertook to bring this about.
- 5. For safety's sake, ought not these utilities to exercise control over government? Guthrie undertook to bring this about also.

In most ways the ambitions of young Guthrie coincided with those of the rest of the inhabitants of the young country. He and the other Kentucky Democrats were firm supporters of Clay's ceaseless agitation for Federal appropriations for internal improvements. Clay was a compromiser, and that was all right too. Sectional differences were troublesome and nobody knew it any better than border town merchants doing business with all comers and all opinions.

There was, of course, the slave. He wasn't adapted to farming in Kentucky and he was a drain. In the minds of some persons there was a persistent nightmare. With the natural increase of slaves, will the day come when Kentucky will embark in the trade and breed for sale? The day came, and over the handsome turnpikes—as well as down the river—gangs of wailing blacks were driven south to the great markets in New Orleans. The mild Kentucky climate produced better specimens than the far South and when the great cotton boom started in the forties, with prime field hands bringing \$1,000 and more apiece, the temptation could not be resisted.

It was a desolate thing to hear a slave preacher perform a marriage with the words "until death or distance do you part," but what was to be done about it? Business is business and Louisville money went into it. The rattle of the cash box drowned the cries of the wretches bound for the Red River hells and softened the advertisements that dotted the Louisville papers: "I wish to sell a negro woman and four children. The woman is 22 years old, of good character, a good cook and washer. The children are very likely, from 6 years down to 1½. I will sell them together or separately to suit purchasers."

Guthrie did not trouble himself much about this pestilent question. As a member of the State legislature from 1827

to 1841, he sat on committees and dealt with internal improvements. He pushed through a succession of charters for turnpike companies, got subsidies for river improvement and, most important of all, looked to the incorporation of railway companies. From Indiana he got a charter to put a bridge across the Ohio at Louisville. The matter of a Kentucky charter had already been attended to. Then there was the canal. Years before, it had been plain that a canal around the rapid at Louisville would be another advantage to local merchants. Work proceeded by fits and starts until, in 1826, the year before Guthrie went to the legislature, Congress was persuaded to put \$100,000 in the enterprise. Guthrie attached himself to the project and by 1837 the stock was selling at \$130 a share; by 1839 it paid a dividend of seventeen per cent. Through this bottle neck all boats of any size must pass and the size of the tolls brought the merchants of Cincinnati almost to the verge of apoplexy. True, when the railroads doomed the river business after 1860 canal traffic declined, but by that time private interests were gone and the Federal government owned it all-and charged no toll whatever.

By the time Guthrie retired from the legislature he had accomplished about all he could there. A railroad from Louisville to Frankfort was under way and the Bank of Kentucky was on its feet. In 1834, within a year after the United States Bank had gone down under Jackson's attack upon it, Guthrie put a new charter through at Frankfort. For many years he was a director and, for a time, its president. The merchants of Cincinnati may have raged but they were envious too. "It is for want of a James Guthrie that a reputation for inertness has been fastened upon Cincinnati,"

said the Commercial later on. If Guthrie was the leading spirit in enterprise, there were grouped about him many others. There was his friend, Mr. Newcomb, the grocer, who shipped his sugars to towns as far off as Detroit. His business, begun in 1840, sometimes cleared as much as two hundred thousand a year. He was cold in manner, but preoccupation with trade was understood to be the reason. Trade, trade, trade; they played into each other's hands and kept on doing it. "If a merchant sells a bolt of calico or a demijohn of whiskey to a customer out of the usual radius of Louisville's trade, he doesn't stay to wash the black from the marking pot off from his hands before he runs to his neighbors with the good news, and makes them glad also. The tidings spread; Snooks has sold a heavy bill of goods to a merchant from Tadpole, Indiana. All the trade of Tadpole used to go to Cincinnati. An item must be made of this in tomorrow's papers. Le's all take a drink to Louisville's luck; and they all drink and the Tadpole merchant among them. The chances are that that fortunate man, if he accepts everything offered him, will have enough surplus whiskey and cigars to start a small grocery when he gets home." In 1853, De Bow estimated that no less than fifty thousand transients visited Louisville each year from downriver.

The stream of profit was constant; the accumulation of wealth steady. In a single year—1865—2,336 persons in Louis-ville paid taxes on income of over \$7,296,000. And as the money accumulated a cosmopolitan atmosphere pervaded the town. Pigs still rooted in the streets but nobody minded. The services of Isaiah Rogers, the designer of the Tremont House in Boston, were secured for Louisville and the Galt House was built. It was a stunner and the reputation of its

bar and dining room spread through the country. While much of the country was still a wilderness, these counting-house nabobs were organizing dining clubs, inviting each other to membership and then carefully restricting admissions. There was much entertaining; Mrs. Pierce Butler lived next door to the bank and gave elegant small parties. By degrees the social structure of the town hardened into cast iron.

The vital problem was a direct connection with the South. Calhoun had had a vision of a railroad connecting Charleston and Cincinnati; it had never got farther than a vision. A direct line from Louisville to Nashville and Memphis opening country that had hitherto been almost inaccessible except overland from the river could transport all the goods that flowed down from the North into the catch basin at the falls. Guthrie and his associates grasped the situation, a charter was secured from the legislature and on the 4th of September, 1851, the subscription books for the Louisville & Nashville Railroad were opened in Guthrie's office. Where was capital to come from? It was suggested that the city itself invest and it did to the extent of a million dollars. Farmers who wanted to get in on a good thing subscribed for stock and paid for it by doing grading themselves. Having got the thing started, Guthrie went off to Washington in 1853 to become Pierce's Secretary of the Treasury and Governor John Helm of Kentucky was elected president of the road.

But there were difficulties and delays. Agents went to Europe with satchels full of city and county bonds; ten of the company bonds were disposed of in Frankfort on the Main and the six per cent bonds did a little better in Paris, but the Crimean War had upset the European bankers and the agents came home. Furthermore, there were unmistakable signs that the country was in for hard times. This was the situation when Guthrie came back to Louisville in '57, and grappled with the problem. He was successful. In the face of the panic of '59, with railroads going bankrupt all over the country, he was able to sell a million dollars' worth of bonds at par and the road was completed. The equipment was meager and so was the rolling stock, but from the start the road was a success. In the process Guthrie had completely consolidated his own position and when, in October, 1860, he took over the presidency of the road he had made the L. & N. the great single influence in Louisville and Kentucky. Everything he had done had built up to this point.

The whole question of disunion was maddening. "Kentucky can never rejoice that the day of compromise is past," said one worthy; "to do so would be false to her history, her position and dearest interest." Louisville may have had Southern feelings but mercantile interest proved a powerful brake on the passions. What would happen to Mr. Guthrie's Indiana railroad interests if a war got started? What would happen to Mr. Newcomb's business? As for Governor Magoffin, his heart was with the South and he resigned his job, so thorny did it finally become. He died a millionaire, most of the money made in Chicago. Some of these factors must have been understood above the Ohio, for on the 29th of May, 1861, Kentucky bank notes were being discounted in Northern markets at from 2 to 21/2 per cent discount, whereas Maryland notes ran from 5 to 10 and Missouri 15. In the autumn of the previous year, with the question of secession breaking the country wide open, John Bell, the compromise candidate for the Presidency, had carried Kentucky. It was no use. Lincoln was elected and in December, one by one, the Cotton States began to leave the Union. What was to happen to Kentucky and to Louisville? What was Guthrie to do?

3

The bombardment of Fort Sumter occurred on April 17, 1861; it was followed by Lincoln's call for volunteers; war was a certainty. A week later Guthrie thus addressed his fellow citizens: "Keep up your relations of trade and good fellowship . . . and heed the counsels of men who have counselled peace and harmony and attendant prosperity." Attendant prosperity! The Confederates were feverishly buying supplies of all sorts in the States north of the Ohio and rushing them south against the evil hour. Prices had skyrocketed and some few in Ohio, Indiana and Illinois were achieving riches overnight. Speed was essential to the southerners and there was but one way: over the Louisville & Nashville. Frantically the road strove to cope with the traffic. Goods were piled in the open air, on sidings, any old place. So overpowering was the glut that toward the end of April the road had to refuse to accept freight and allow ten days to clear the line. The Louisvillians were accustomed to activity, but this was staggering. All through May the inundation continued. "Day and night for weeks past, every avenue of approach to the depor has been blocked with vehicles waiting to discharge their loads, while almost fabulous prices have been paid for hauling and the road has been taxed to its utmost capacity to carry through the enormous quantities of freight delivered to it."

On the 2d of May the Federal treasury, which knew well enough what was going on, forbade shipment of provisions or munitions south. This was serious, but the day was saved on the 16th when, less than a month after Bull Run, the Kentucky legislature voted "strict neutrality." The traffic rolled merrily on, for how could the Federal treasury meddle with a neutral State? On the 12th of June Washington ordered Guthrie to cease shipments and appointed a new collector of customs with the express provision that a permit was required to ship any goods south over the road. Guthrie met this issue with great adroitness. He called a meeting of his board of directors, including those from the Confederate State of Tennessee and arranged a friendly suit before a Federal judge in Louisville! Meantime the road kept right on doing business. On the 4th of July Governor Harris of Tennessee decided to force Guthrie's hand; he seized the Nashville end of the line and demanded that the railroad president co-operate with the Confederate military in maintaining train service. But Guthrie was much too wary to be ensnared by this bait. He refused and when a week later, on the 11th of July, the Louisville judge upheld the government's right to intervene, Guthrie acquiesced-and then kept right on, using forged permits!

All summer long this seesaw was going on. Finally on the 18th of September, Guthrie's fellow townsman, General Simon Buckner, C.S.A., invaded the State and seized the road as far as Bowling Green. (General Buckner had had his troubles; he also had "judiciously invested" in Chicago real estate and to hold on to it he deeded it to his brother-in-law who was in the Union Army. Whereupon the brother-in-law in his will bequeathed the property to Buckner again.)

The general now issued a manifesto addressed to Guthrie suggesting that the road's agents and employees continue in their work—for the protection of the stockholders, of course, but under Buckner's military control. And this statement was issued at a moment when the traffic was so great as to strain the road's capacity to the breaking point!

But Guthrie had at last made up his mind and refused. "It would," he said, "have been giving aid and comfort to the enemy!" The die was cast; the months of swaying backward and forward, waiting and watching, were over. Mr. Guthrie's policy was clear, he was a Union man now. A few days later, in October, 1861, Mr. Cameron, the Secretary of War-he had been a railroad man and banker too-came to Louisville with his adjutant general. He and Mr. Guthrie had a conference. As a result of it an invasion of the South from Louisville along the L. & N. was agreed upon. An encampment was organized at Louisville and a large army assembled. Money poured into the town. The railroad presidents, meeting in Washington, had decided that a rate of two cents a mile for troops and a discount of ten per cent on freight would be satisfactory. Not for Guthrie. His road, he said, was too near the seat of war and he needed higher rates. He got them. And when the government determined to administer the railways it fell out that one of Guthrie's own subordinates, an L. & N. official, was appointed as director of railroads. Everything was as it should be. The great offensive began and when, in '63, Guthrie desired to extend a branch line to the Kentucky coal fields, General Burnside put a military engineer in charge and the Negroes along the line were "impressed" to do the work. At the end of the war the road was bigger and in better shape than it had been

at the start, and Guthrie could present a glowing balance sheet. Profits for 1861 were fifty-seven per cent of the gross! From 1863 on this was the story:

## NET INCOME

1862	\$1,062,169
1863	\$1,803,95
1864	\$2,172,51
1865	\$1,592,05

At the close of the Civil War, Louisville, with a population under 100,000, was approaching the peak of its importance—to the rest of the country. Its vitality was near the top. Through the railroad a virtual monopoly of the traffic south had been established. The road, the city government, and business—represented frequently by the same persons who placed a sculptured locomotive on the City Hall—had co-operated closely to preserve and to enlarge this monopoly.

The destruction of the plantation system in the far South had resulted in the springing up of general stores everywhere. The drummer—almost unheard of in the South—appeared and forth from Louisville went thousands of traveling salesmen. If you were a Confederate veteran, that was recommendation enough for a job. So close were business ties in Louisville that it was said that "if a hardware drummer could sell a consignment of groceries for a Louisville house, he always took the order and passed it on to the Louisville groceryman." Louisville wholesalers and jeans makers sent their salesmen as far as Texas, making long circuits on horseback before the railroads had crossed the State. By 1869, as a result of this Southern demand, the exports of Louisville were double the imports. And in the midst of all this

activity was the railroad under Guthrie's presiding genius. "It is the Louisville & Nashville Railroad with James Guthrie at its head that is putting the iron spokes in the commercial wheel of Louisville," said the Cincinnati Commercial in 1868. It was begrudged admiration; the upriver merchants were full of bile because Louisville was the most direct route south for them and Guthrie was making them pay through the nose.

Barely was the war over when the road began pushing southward. In 1872-after negotiations that all but ended in a fist fight and brawl in the Blue Parlor of the new Galt House-it undertook the completion of the road which connected Decatur and Montgomery and made the city of Birmingham a possibility. By 1880 it had acquired various lines to Mobile and New Orleans and had a mileage of almost two thousand miles. In addition, it acquired the control of the Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis, and for a generation kept Nashville bottled up, shutting out all competition. The road, by degrees, was growing into the great and overshadowing power of the region, a huge utility that bound the States together. All this was forecast when Guthrie drew a long breath in 1869, declared a forty per cent dividend and died, and his friend, Mr. Newcomb, the grocer, took over the reins.

4

Long since the chief places of influence in the town had become the portion of families that were already "old." There were the directors and the officials of the railroad and the Bank of Kentucky; ringed about them was a fringe of lawyers, frequently connected with the road and the bank by blood or marriage. This small and select company occupied the center. Ringed about them in turn were other banks and lesser corporations; they, too, had their fringe of lawyers. Lawyers were as thick as blackberries. Wholesale liquor and tobacco had a peculiar dignity; wholesale drygoods and shoes had not. The bankers and the railroad directors and their legal cousins and brothers-in-law moved easily into government and back again; the offices and places of administration were passed to and fro, office was considered almost a family perquisite. Thus, John Helm, a grandson of a Kentucky Indian fighter, was governor of the State and president of the Louisville and Nashville. Horatio Bruce, member of the legislature, commonwealth attorney and circuit judge, married the governor's daughter. At the time of his death, in 1903, Mr. Bruce was chief of counsel to the railway. James P. Helm, a son of the governor, was for many years one of the attorneys of the railway. Helm Bruce, who united the two families in his own name, was an attorney for the road and at the present moment Thomas Kennedy Helm is one of the road's counsel. Such close and intimate connections could be multiplied in the case of other families. They represent one of the striking influences that has preserved the character of the town. What these families originally acquired they kept, although as time went on and vitality began to decline, more effort went toward keeping what they had than to acquiring more.

From the countinghouses flowed the money that watered and nourished a society termed "brilliant," a brilliancy largely made up of elaborate food and drink. Daughters were brought out with parties at the Galt House; whether the Chickering or the Steinway lent more distinction to a parlor was a delicate point. Mr. Kendrick, the jeweler, and after him Mr. Lemon—who was himself a person of some circumstance—supplied these families with diamonds, solid silver, and fine glass. The horse show was regarded as the opening of the season in the fall; in 1875 the Derby was instituted. Manners were stiff, generally humorless, and at times suffocating. Mr. Brown, the rich distiller, was a Presbyterian elder and regarded the casual drinking of whisky with disapproval. It should be taken medicinally or not at all.

The Germans—the only immigrants who ever came to Louisville—lived by themselves and were not received. "When I was a girl," said a lady, "there was a German caterer named Klein whose daughter went to the school attended by my sister and myself. We were always very polite to her but it was understood that we were from different worlds. True, her father no longer appeared at the parties for which he did the catering; he sent his waiters. He kept a carriage and had a handsome residence, but that made no difference."

Wedding invitations must be delivered by carriage—hire a carriage if you don't own one—and once the invitations were out, the bride was kept in a dim, gray seclusion until the wedding, lest the passing glance of some rude male tarnish the bloom that now belonged to the prospective husband alone.

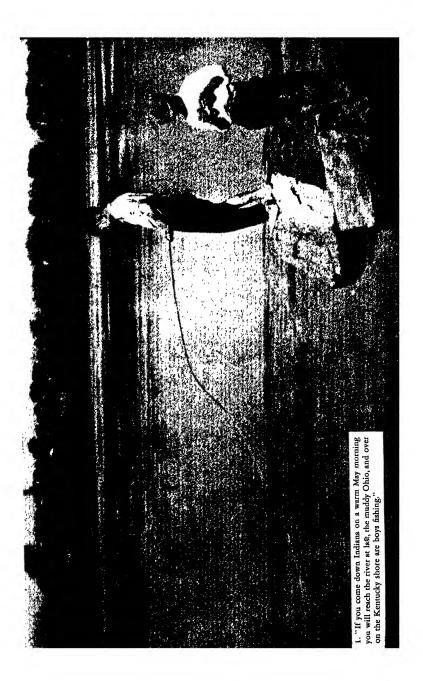
That any genuine intellectual life could flourish in such an atmosphere was, of course, impossible. What there was, for the most part, was drained into politics and the law; the product was a facile adroitness in the strategies of litigation and an unflagging interest and zeal in the arts of politicking.

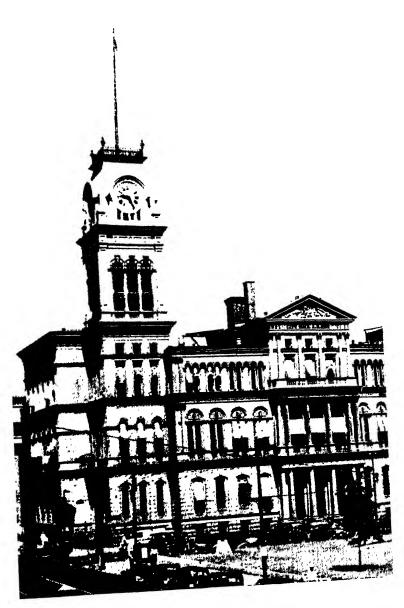
In the sciences there was a Stygian darkness. Poetry was represented by the maunderings of Madison Cawein; the high point in the novel was Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch. Louisville gave to the stage two celebrities: Mary Anderson, beautiful and without fire, and Roland Hayes, the tenor. Both conventional successes in different generations. An active intellect was apt to move away. Ellen Semple, the geographer, was a native of Louisville, but her work was done elsewhere. Louis Brandeis was born there—and left town. There was left the conventional, an agreeable deliberation of manner and a moth-eaten, moribund "charm."

A step down from this level of ponderous self-esteem, manners were somewhat more relaxed. The river-boat gamblers met the men of the town on tolerably even terms; in an atmosphere where an idea died early, there was at least no evangelical caterwauling. At intervals a roulette wheel appeared at the Galt House. The aged Buckner, his Chicago real estate happily married to his devotion to the Lost Cause, could be seen there smoking a corncob. Poker playing and race-track betting was common. Henry Watterson of the Courier-Journal—whose capacity at liquor was considered startling even for that region—on one occasion sent a relay of messengers to the office for supplies of cash to tide him through the game; when he had cleaned the office out and there was nothing left but some Mexican money, he commandeered that.

Below this level were small tradesmen and the clerks, then the white workers, and at the bottom the Negro who dwelt in that half world to which God had been pleased to call him. Wages were low and labor unions were firmly repressed. Clerks worked for a lifetime in the old business houses for little pay and felt themselves honored. Let well enough alone. That was it. And the railroad and the Bank of Kentucky ruled over all.

But presently-by imperceptible degrees-a change occurred. The road held a southbound monopoly; its rates were high, but it gave Louisville trade a distinct advantage. Up to a point this advantage was generally conceded. But about 1870 it dawned on some Louisville people that it was just possible that the hoisting of rates was not so much intended to benefit the local merchants as it was for the road to make money. By the next year the mayor was forced to take notice of this condition in his annual report. Barely twenty years before any sacrifice seemed desirable to get a road. Louisville was a city of opportunity; any man could make a fortune if he would bestir himself; and so on. The farmers in the region had felt the same way. Mr. Guthrie, to all appearances, had been but the most ambitious, the most able, and the luckiest among his equals. Was it possible that Mr. Guthrie's creation, once the pride of all, had become the boss? Complaints rapidly increased. "The L. & N. railroad makes us pay just what they please," said a citizen of Lebanon, "and we are bound to submit to it. They run to their own time and we have to submit. . . . [There is a] gentleman in this city who owns stock for which he paid the trifling sum of \$200, that today is worth \$5,000 paying six per cent all the time." The cry of the little man was beginning to be heard and at that same moment it was going up throughout the country. Monopoly! The man with the lumberyard downstate, the little wholesale grocer, the small tobacco grower were falling behind in the race. The people





2. LOUISVILLE CITY HALL, ERECTED 1871

They put a sculptured locomotive on the pediment of the City Hall and "the railroad and the Bank of Kentucky ruled over all."

of the Great Meadow were crying for help. To them Wendell Phillips was simply the name of a pestilent abolitionist; his exhortation to the disbanding antislavery forces—the battle is not over, it has only begun-would have meant nothing. What they wanted was better service and a low rate. Plain enough. The bitterness of the Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce was something else again. They could understand that, even if it were only jealousy. "Opulent and powerful from high rates of transportation and a virtual monopoly of trade southward . . . impoverishing the farmers along its route by failing to provide the means of transportation for their grain crops as will compensate them to send their crops to market; subsidizing by favors, after the Erie fashion, prominent and less prominent members of the legislature, the L. & N. R. R. Co. with that soulless characteristic that attaches to most corporations, is prepared to exact its gigantic powers to the injury not only of Cincinnati but of a very large section of Kentucky." Then the Grange movement began its sweep through the country and the Kentucky farmers became infected.

By 1880 it was plain that a line was being drawn. Two things happened: the road declared a hundred per cent stock dividend and a Railroad Commission was set up to regulate rates. They didn't regulate very long. Three years later the names of Jay Gould, Thomas Fortune Ryan, Russell Sage, and—not long after—Jacob Schiff and August Belmont appeared in the list of directors. It was a formal notice that the age of Mr. Guthrie and his grocer friend was over. Finally, in 1884, Milton H. Smith was elected president of the L. & N. Thereafter, for thirty-seven years, he was the boss

and operating head of the road. He told the little man what he could do—and like it.

5

Like Mr. Guthrie who preceded him and Mr. Brown who came after him. Milton Hannibal Smith was not a native of Louisville. He was born on a farm in rural New York and after a boyhood in Illinois set out for the South in 1858 to make his fortune. He was twenty-two and stubborn. His first job-selling Appleton's Encyclopedia from door to door in Mississippi-was hardly begun when John Brown raided Harpers Ferry. It scared Appleton out of their wits and they wired Smith to quit. Stranded, he got a job teaching school and during a holiday learned telegraphy. So adept did he become-and he could take a message off the wire to the end of his life-that he left his school for a telegraph office at Oxford, Mississippi. He discovered that "he had talent as a train dispatcher" and was so engaged when the Civil War began. Neither the causes nor the spiritual agonies of that conflict bothered him. He moved troops for the Confederacy, and when the Federals got into his neighborhood he moved troops for them. When the Federal military railroad service was organized he entered it and served all over the South. In August, 1866, he came to Louisville as local agent of the L. & N., Guthrie then being at the height of his influence. Able and efficient, he rose very rapidly; impatient and shorttempered, in 1878 in a rage he flounced out of the L. & N. when some order had been countermanded. Four years later, in 1882, he came back to stay.

Between Guthrie and Smith as citizens of Louisville there

lay an age. Guthrie lived and died a Louisvillian; he was in every way identified with the city which he dominated. His riches and his interests began there and grew outward. Smith came with no such attachments-either to Louisville or to any other place. The railroad was all. The road was no longer an arm of Louisville; rather Louisville had become but one of many arms of the railroad. It was Smith's function to serve as the planner, executive, servant, and boss of a great utility that had burst all local bounds, that had risen above government and was in most respects a law unto itself. Smith regarded the region south of the Ohio as a sort of wilderness tract created by the Almighty to provide a field of operation for himself and the L. & N. This wilderness was peopled with animated dummies who were to be used, conciliated, manipulated, or suppressed to suit the need of the moment and the demands of his road. Completely devoid of social curiosity, vision, or conscience-he would not have known what the words meant-he devoted thirty-seven years as an administrator to telling people to get the hell out of the aisle.

The financial control was in New York, but Smith exerted an appreciable influence upon it and the physical control was his absolutely. As years went on, he grew more and more autocratic and more ruthless in the face of opposition. Fight rather than negotiate was his rule of action. True, in later years, Morgan forced him to take a share of the Monon and it made Smith feel "worse than a spell of sickness" and he had to put up with the devilings of Hetty Green when that lady had her car backed into the Louisville yards and undertook to lecture him for an extravagant use of brass on his engines. But such interferences were few; Smith was the road and the road was Smith.

A hard bargainer, Smith is said to have refused to own more than enough shares in the road to act as director; his salary never rose above twenty-five thousand dollars and he refused, years before his death, to have it doubled on the ground that "no railroad president is worth more than twenty-five thousand a year." When he died in 1921 he left an estate—excluding an income of some \$12,000 settled upon his widow—of \$202,000. Small takings when compared to those of his pirate friends and contemporaries.

He paid as low wages as he could and placidly saw capable engineers, whom he had trained, depart because he would not raise their pay. In a strike he was merciless and without scruple. He was cautious, secretive, and adroit in stratagems. He could act circuitously, as when he secretly subsidized doggerel versifiers during a political campaign. In '93, having learned through means known only to himself, that a conductor named Polly was organizing for Debs's union, he dispatched a wire to the division superintendent: "Suggest you relieve Polly." An hour or so later he wired again: "Has Polly been relieved?" The bewildered superintendent replied that Polly was on his run. Smith wired a third time: "Send a special and relieve Polly." It was done and Mr. Polly vanished from the L. & N. forever. In afteryears football players were recruited from colleges to act as skull crushers in L. & N. strikes. Mr. Smith would have approved. He despised passenger traffic-"you can't make a God damn cent out of it"-and saw his coaches reach the antique stage without a pang. He cursed Jim Crow laws because it cost money to divide the coaches or build separate ones. He wanted longhaul freight and to get it—he invested the road's money. He perhaps had more to do with the development of Birmingham, Alabama, than any other single man, for he saw in the coal and iron there a source of traffic for his road. He would build a spur to the door of any man who would open a mine or build a furnace—and frequently put the road's money in the venture. The road existed to make money and in order that it should he saw to it that it operated efficiently. The idea that his road might also be a public utility he would have laughed to scorn. When an Interstate Commerce Commissioner suggested to Smith that under the sacred freedom of contract to which he was so devoted a shipper was forced to pay whatever Smith desired to charge, the railroad president denied it. "What could he do?" asked the commissioner. "He could walk."

Smith lived quietly in Louisville at Fourth and Oak, refused to give interviews, took naps frequently, kept a fast horse, and devoted himself to the administration of his road and to the crushing of opposition. "He had no interest in politics save where it touched his railroad," and there was no point where they did not touch. In the list of those who have emasculated popular government Smith must have an honored place. The debauching of legislatures was in line of duty and it was done. Government was anathema and Smith did not hesitate to say so. In every county seat through which the railroad ran were lawyers hired to watch the road's interests. Many of them were sent to the legislature as representatives-or, if not, their relatives or close friends were sent. Sometimes the local banker acted. All the filaments that bound this system together terminated in Smith's office in Louisville. Judges, senators, legislators, and officeholders of all brands traveled over the road free of charge and for a purpose. To effect this purpose a corps of lobbyists was maintained; among them none more distinguished than that eminent citizen of Louisville, General Basil Duke, C.S.A.

A Confederate cavalryman under Morgan, Duke had married Morgan's sister, Henrietta, and had ended up as a dashing, if not especially able, general himself. One of the ruling class, his family was allied to others quite as distinguished. He was high-spirited, his manner considered "chivalrous," and he had literary talents as well. His onerous legal dutiesin large part-consisted in occupying strategic positions at Frankfort, the State capital, with "his pockets full of passes." Frankfort is but a short ride from Louisville over the L. & N. and you can go back and forth with ease. The general found time to edit the Southern Magazine published in Louisville which proposed to be "in its tone and general character, distinctly and essentially Southern, representative of the region south of the Ohio-redolent, so far as not to be offensive, of the flavor and full of the local color of this section."

One can imagine the general stepping over to the office in the Columbia Building in the summer of '94, his mind occupied with his editorial which waited to be written. "It cannot be too often repeated," the general told his readers, "that the average negro is yet a savage" and lynch law should not be "suffered to become obsolete." As for east European immigration, "we are convinced that it has been of detriment to every part of this country into which it has been introduced and its presence would prove a veritable curse to the South." Oh, those sunny, sunny days in Louisville, and Mary Anderson, our dear Mary, how charming as Perdita! And as Parthenia! Sir, her beauty was dazzling. But it was the Debs

strike of '94 that roused the general to his great effort. His wrath was blistering. "Legislators often make haste to obey and gratify the licentious and utterly selfish spirit which insists that all other interests shall be subordinated to its [the union's] most unreasonable demands." As a lobbyist and legislative agent, General Duke knew an unreasonable demand when he saw or made one. Beneath all his gallantry and distinction he was Milton Smith's hired man. He pitched his case upon a high moral note. He did not venture into the realism of his boss who could say: "Under our form of government it is permissible to do anything necessary to get another man's property providing you can keep out of jail. All legislative bodies are a menace. In action they are a calamity."

Not quite, of course, for there were the courts. The Minnesota Rate Case in '89 had smashed State regulation of railways and subsequent decisions had crippled the Interstate Commerce Commission. Sometimes Smith desponded: "I think the people of this country . . . are going to confiscate the railroads; they have the power and are going to do it; it is a matter of time." But such fits of depression did not happen often. "He saw from the first," said an admirer, "that if a railroad was to be made a factor in the development of a state, increased traffic must not be its sole idea; but it must achieve power, influence and success itself." And the road's power, influence, and success by that time spread far beyond Louisville and Kentucky. By 1891 the editor of the Birmingham News could say with admiration: "The Louisville & Nashville is now not only Birmingham, but Alabama."

That discouraged remark of Smith's about "the people" taking the railroads had some show of reason behind it, at

least in Kentucky. After years of railroad domination, there finally had appeared a man who was capable of putting up a fight. He was younger than Smith, but quite as able and as ruthless. There had been preliminary skirmishes in the legislature and elsewhere, a long-drawn-out preparation for battle. Then in May, 1899, the Kentucky Democrats met at Louisville and after eight hectic days and nights nominated this champion for the governorship. Or, rather, it would be more proper to say that the champion nominated himself. Before the campaign was over Louisville had been patrolled by soldiers, the city had been turned upside down and scores of families broken up, so bitter had feeling become. The champion's name was William Goebel.

6

William Goebel was the son of an immigrant German who had settled in Covington, Kentucky, up the river from Louis-ville and across from Cincinnati. His family and blood were his first crime; he was an outlander and a plebeian. There had been no judges or brigadiers in his family, no bluegrass, julep traditions. Restless, intensely ambitious, and with no money, he studied law in Covington in the office of a former governor. In 1887, barely thirty years old, Goebel was elected to the State Senate. He was close-mouthed, had few friends, and was not given to confidences, but he had already shown skill as a political strategist and manipulator.

The cry of the farmers and the small businessmen throughout the State against the railroad and the "corporations" was by this time incessant. It was these people that Goebel elected to lead. Opposed by the old families and the Bourbons, he

built up in the towns a following that became as blind in its devotion to him as his enemies were blind in their harred. Such an enemy was Colonel John Sandford of Covington. Colonel Sandford, a Confederate soldier of some distinction and a member of an old Kentucky family, had a bank, Furthermore, he was a stockholder in toll roads. Those roads which Guthrie long before had sedulously nursed were still doing business; Kentucky highways still, in 1895, were controlled by corporations. It appears that before this there had been no love lost between the two men, and when young Goebel began his campaign to force down the tolls and midnight raids to smash toll houses and gates got started, the quarrel became more bitter. The fight reached the newspapers and Sandford was dubbed Gonorrhea John. A day or so later when the two enemies met on the steps of Sandford's bank, Goebel acknowledged authorship. Both reached for their guns but Goebel got there first. Sandford fell dead, Goebel had a bullet hole through his coat. The young senator was held to have acted in self-defense and there was no trial.

In 1896 the frightful specter of Bryan appeared; the rail-road crowd regarded him as an incendiary, so did the old families. The State Bankers' Association demanded the election of McKinley in order to "repudiate the communistic assault on property which these radical demagogues were making." There was some point to this; the Railroad Commission had found in 1889 that there was more than twelve million dollars' worth of railroad property in Kentucky that was exempt from any tax whatever. General Buckner, deserting the cool recesses of the Galt House, consented to run for the Vice-Presidency on the Gold Democrats ticket

with Palmer. The Kentucky papers—even the Courier-Journal—obediently fell into line. And Goebel stuck to Bryan. The result was that McKinley carried Kentucky and for the first time a Republican state administration got the jobs in Kentucky.

But the legislature remained in the hands of the Democrats and by this time Goebel was the controlling force there. He had torn politics wide open. Louisville rested under the rule of John Whallen, "the good boss," who with his brother had come down the river from Cincinnati to become the proprietors of the Buckingham Burlesque Theatre and Saloon. Between Whallen and the railroad was a close connection. But the iniquitous Goebel had got into town and, while Whallen was secure in the Democratic organization, the Democratic officeholders in both city and county had been tampered with. With a Republican administration at Frankfort, the railroad was content. The legislature and the city wards were keeping the railroad banking element awake at night.

Without rest, Goebel pushed on. A franchise tax on corporations was jammed through the legislature. A Railroad Commission with increased powers was demanded, a bill to create it was passed and vetoed by the Republican governor. An employers' liability law roused feeling to a higher pitch than ever. No means, however devious or ruthless, seem to have been ignored by Goebel in his fight. Then he was damned outright when he secured the passage in 1898 of the Goebel Election Law. This provided that a commission of three persons, appointed by the legislature, should in turn appoint the election boards throughout the State. And since it was the election boards who counted the ballots, that

man who controlled the legislature which appointed the boards was in a fair way to control the State.

This was the general situation when in May, 1800, the Democratic convention met in Louisville at the Music Hall. Goebel was forty-three years old, Smith was sixty-three. With but a fraction of the delegates at the start, Goebel succeeded in maneuvering the convention into one blind alley after another. Hysterical oratory, brawls, and fist fights punctuated the proceedings that dragged their interminable course through eight sweltering days and nights. Goebel's nerve and self-control completely baffled the opposition. In the end, Whallen's forces were routed and the railroad allies also; Goebel was nominated for the governorship. In a gathering where, Watterson said, "the L. & N. Railroad was the main factor," Goebel had won, after doing "nothing to his competitors-whatever he did to them-that they were not ready to do to him. Every man, woman and child in Kentucky knows this to be the truth."

The campaign that followed was of a sort never seen before in Kentucky—nor since, for that matter. Goebel pitched his case on the corporations alone and the L. & N. above all. Scarcely a newspaper supported him. He could rely on the organization he had built up and the statewide following which accepted him without question, but the brains and the strategy were his alone. Against him the opposition was solid. An independent Democratic ticket was set up to draw support away from him, the real effort and money was put behind the Republican candidate. The forlorn candidate of the Democratic splinter, cartooned as a monkey dancing to the music of General Duke's hand organ, was represented in a Goebel parade coffined and with the label, "Died of

an overdose of L. & N." It was said that the road was going the limit and would spend a million dollars to beat Goebel. Smith kept quiet. An Honest Election League, under the patronage of Boss Whallen, was got up in Louisville, to which all honest men might repair and help defeat the rebel. Among the railroad counsel, Mr. Helm was particularly active. Whenever he spoke in Louisville, Goebel took pains to refer to General Duke as a "professional corruptionist." To this the general replied cryptically: "I speak within due bounds when I say that Goebel has been more frequently suspected of bargaining and using his influence as a legislator than I have been of attempting to so control legislation."

November 7, 1899, was election day. It was expected that returns from the eastern mountain Republican counties would be delayed—until perhaps the results downstate were known—and they were. The state election board—Goebel's own—after days of agonized waiting, announced the returns thus:

Taylor (Republican)	 193,714
Goebel (Democratic)	 191,331
Brown (Independent Democratic)	 12,140

At once Goebel served notice that he would contest the election in the legislature.

In a tense atmosphere Mr. Taylor and his administration took office. On the first of January, 1900, the Democratic Senate, Mr. Goebel among them, caucused. A senator arose and told of being offered \$4,500 by Boss Whallen to stay away from the caucus. The notices of contest, filed by the Democrats, charged that in Louisville and in a number of counties, "more than enough voters who were in the em-

ploy of the L. & N. Railroad Co. to change the result of the election were intimidated by the heads of the company and caused to vote for the contestees" and that "the Republican leaders entered into conspiracy with the chief officers of the L. & N. Railroad, the American Book Co. and other corporations by which the latter were to furnish money which was corruptly used."

The Goebel wheels began to turn and Republican senators found themselves unseated, on the grounds of fraudulent election. There were continuous conferences in Louisville, Frankfort, the little capital, was crowded; it was impossible to get a room at the old pillared Capital Hotel. As the fight went on, grudges of every kind boiled over. Two Republicans of Louisville who couldn't bury the hatchet and make common cause against Goebel, met in the Capital Hotel lobby, and opened fire. One of them got as far as the steps and pitched over dead. The postmaster of Shelbyville, down for a little politicking, got a bullet through the heart. Another man was shot in the back and still another in the foot. In addition to all this, "O. D. Redpath, a Chicago drummer, was knocked down in the rush for the doors and had his leg broken by someone falling over him."

Meantime the Republican governor, in a state of jitters, watched the unseating process going on in the legislature. Plainly it was only a matter of time before a revised assembly would declare Goebel governor. On the 25th of January, early in the morning, a special train arrived over the L. & N. from the mountain region, carrying well over a thousand armed men. To petition the legislature for justice, declared the Republicans; to overawe the legislature, according to the Goebelites. It was freely predicted that if the legislature

dared to make Goebel governor, he would never survive. A killing was certain.

Toward noon on the 30th of January, as Goebel was going up the path to the State House, someone from a window of the administration building, shot him with a rifle. Pandemonium broke loose. The militia, under control of the governor, were sent for on the double and the legislature was refused admission to the State House. Goebel was picked up and carried back to the hotel. Surgeons hurriedly looked him over and declared it was no use. But he refused to die. In the midst of all the tumult the Democratic majority was ordered to meet. They couldn't. They couldn't get into the State House and the militia kept them out of the Opera House and the diminutive City Hall. "The head and front of our present troubles," said Watterson, "at once the source and resource of the revolutionary proceeding by which republican government has been for the time being struck down and a military dictatorship set up in its place is the L. & N. Railroad Co. . . . One motion of the head of the L. & N. . . . and the whole lawless Taylor fabric falls to the earth." In the end the Democrats gathered in the hotel and declared Goebel and his ticket elected. With all speed they gathered round the bedside and the dying man was sworn in and his young lieutenant after him. The next day, after some legal moves, he was sworn in again. That was the limit of his strength. On the evening of February 3d he died. "Tell my friends to be brave and fearless and loyal to the great common people" were his last words according to his hysterical followers.

The road was immediately charged with the murder. Watterson went so far as to declare: "He was ambitious . . .

But there are kinds and degrees of ambition. He wished to do the state some service. He thought the best way to attain this end was to represent the interests of the great body of the people against the growing aggression of the great chartered companions. It cost him his life . . . They could not buy him and they could not bully him. They had to cause him to be killed." The attacks finally brought the directors of the road into the open. "It would be unreasonable," they declared, "to expect corporate interests to so disregard the injury inflicted or threatened by constant attacks of political agitators as to be entirely silent as long as the politicians seek office by appeals to the passions and prejudices of the voters and especially by efforts to excite hostile feelings to be followed by hostile legislation!"

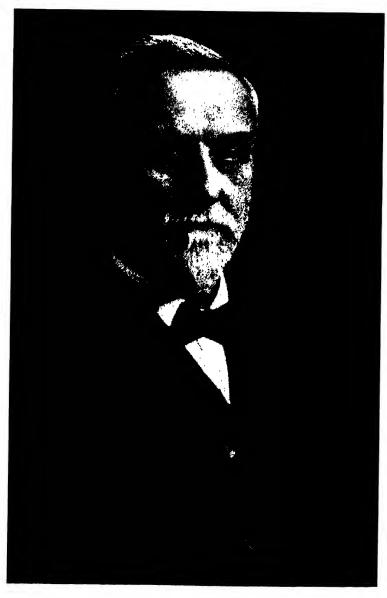
Be that as it may. The only man who ever had attempted to buck the powers that be in Louisville, in Kentucky, and in New York—and succeeded—had got his. It has never been tried in Kentucky since. The waters covered him and it was all over. The funeral orations were masterpieces of caution. After he was dead, they set up his Railroad Commission—it wasn't as clear then as afterward that State commissions could be controlled—and presently Federal legislation had been strengthened to a point where some restraint could be put upon railroads. Goebel as a lawyer is said to have earned twenty-five thousand a year; so did Smith. His estate is said to have been about a quarter of a million dollars. Smith's did not greatly exceed it.

It is as a field general among American political reformers that Goebel stands alone. Neither Jim Hogg of Texas, who preceded him, nor Robert La Follette of Wisconsin, who came after him, resembled him. Nor did Tom Johnson of Cleveland, who had begun life in Louisville working for the DuPont Brothers' street railway. There is but one parallel to the career of this immigrant's child—that of Huey Long, the Louisiana poor white, who thirty-five years after Goebel's death met the same violent end.

Smith had twenty-one years yet to go after Goebel's death. In 1902, one night in the Pendennis Club, he was astonished to learn that Bet-A-Million Gates had made a stock market raid in New York and had captured the L. & N. A deal was made by Morgan and presently the control of the road passed to the Atlantic Coast Line where it has remained ever since. By degrees the "Old Man" was actually growing old. The great powers that the railroads had once exerted were passing to other aggregations of capital. But government, which he abominated, was still the enemy. He made short work of the Interstate Commerce Commission until finally in 1918, forced to it by the Supreme Court, he admitted that vouchers in the road's files were made out ambiguously "because it was not deemed advisable to disclose to anyone, not even to the company's own subordinate officers and employees that it [the road] was making political expenditures." But he was nearly done. The star of James B. Brown was rising in Louisville and the Boom Era was in its first raptures. One day Mr. Brown went out to see Mr. Smith and found the railroad president reading a Times-Picayune editorial headed: "Milton Smith: Dead and Doesn't Know It." "What do you think of that?" asked Mr. Smith. Mr. Brown read the editorial. "It's pretty tough," he said. "Yes," said Mr. Smith, "tough, but true." With the eye of a connoisseur he had read Ida Tarbell's History of the Standard Oil. He contemplated writing the story of his life and then gave it



GRANDEUR NO MORE
 A Louisville mansion built in the day when there were packer steamers running on regular schedule between Louisville and Liverpool.



4. "TOO MANY PEOPLE HAVE THE VOTE"

Milron Hannibal Smith 1846-1921: President of the Louisville & Nashville

up because he knew too much. His political philosophy he summed up thus: "Too many people have the vote." Finally, on the 7th of February, 1921, after a sharp request that he be buried quickly and without ceremony, the dinosaur died.

The career of James B. Brown-and he is living stillreached its climax in the crash of the National Bank of Kentucky in November, 1930. Around this old Main Street bank, as around the L. & N., the countinghouse traditions of Louisville were built up. Chartered in 1806 as the Old Bank of Kentucky, after various misadventures and the wreck of the United States Bank, it was equipped with a charter in 1834 secured by James Guthrie. It was one of the leading money fortresses south of the Ohio, its ponderous conservatism revered and worshiped by other bankers. From generation to generation members of the leading capitalist and merchant families of Louisville sat on its board. By slow accretion its resources grew, sedimentary deposits laid down year by year. General Duke, almost upon his knees, wrote a reverent history of it; its stock paid sixteen per cent and more. Originally the State was represented in the directorship, but by the seventies this right was surrendered and the bank became entirely a private institution, the bulwark and pride, the dearest possession of those families which, through sheer survival, looked upon themselves as the anointed of God. It was this institution which James Brown brought to its final glory.

When the World War broke, Louisville was approaching an ossified dotage. In 1910 the tobacco market started to move to the loose-leaf floors near the growing centers. The Kentucky Wagon Manufacturing Company, once the rival of Studebaker, was in decline. In distilling, the tying up of local capital in whisky aging made money still more inert. The ambition of the old families was dying, their employees took their small wages and said nothing. The specters of Populism and William Goebel were laid at rest and, caught in a sort of amber, the town lay upon the riverbank awaiting the last trump of a Presbyterian God.

Suddenly all this was changed by the war. Camp Zachary Taylor was established at Louisville, the town was overrun with soldiers, contractors, and all the camp followers that fatten upon a war boom. The movement south of industry touched Louisville and population jumped. Presently the ranks of the old families wavered, their control was weakened, the social barriers began to cave. A new era was at hand and Jim Brown ushered it in.

James B. Brown was born in rural Kentucky, without benefit of Bluegrass aristocracy, in 1872. His father was a sewing machine salesman and Jim himself believed that a salesman could accomplish anything. When he was fifteen he came to Louisville to work for the Southern News Company and after some slow starts attracted the attention of John Whallen, the boss of Louisville. Whallen was then in his prime, presiding over his burlesque theater in top hat, frock coat, and diamond studs. The boss found a job for Jim in a bank and from then on the salesman's progress was continuous. By 1908 he was president of the bank and then quit it to enter the National Bank of Commerce, sometimes known as the L. & N. bank. Before long he was president of this bank also, but where Louisville bankers in the past were suffocating in their dignity, moving glacially and watching both the right hand and the left, Mr. Brown was alert and expansive. No Galt House-vestryman-Pendennis Club tradition benumbed his vigor. Interested in the turf and adroit in politics, he was forty-five and ready for bigger things when the United States entered the war in 1917.

The war not only provided an opportunity for Mr. Brown's zeal as promoter in Liberty Loan and Red Cross drives; it took him to Washington as a member of the Capital Issues Committee and there he met and dealt with the biggest fat boys in the land. All these years and experiences prepared him for the great merger of 1919 when the National Bank of Kentucky absorbed three other Louisville banks and Jim emerged as president of the consolidation. The year before he had been active in the organization of the Kentucky Jockey Club, a corporation which took over the control of Churchill Downs and other tracks. Whallen was dead now and Milton Smith was near it. Who would succeed to the power they had held? Jim had the bank, THE bank of the South, he was thoroughly acquainted with all the traditions of Kentucky politics and had been schooled by Whallen, a master at the trade. Let others pursue their ambitions to New York; better to be first in Louisville than second in Romeand the neighbors were now to watch the financial and political control of Kentucky united in one person. With characteristic Kentucky markings and coloration, Jim became a tradition himself, the borderland moneymaster of the Harding-Coolidge-Hoover era.

There was another figure in the landscape, Robert W. Bingham, who came to Louisville to practice law in the late nineties when Jim was studying political science with Mr. Whallen. Mr. Bingham, whose father had had a school in North Carolina, went into politics also. On the surface the men were dissimilar. Regarded by many as a handsome man

with distinguished manners and an interest in the finer things, Mr. Bingham had a deep and abiding appreciation of British culture, deeper possibly than that of Walter Hines Page. Jim, on the other hand, was not concerned with the beauty of the English countryside; he could not tell whether an earl beat a marquess and he did not bother with the mystical significance of the crown. While he was busy with his politics and his banks, Mr. Bingham did his lawing and served for a time as mayor and local judge. The careers of the two men moved steadily along and the world never heard of either. But in 1916 Mr. Bingham married the widow of Henry Flagler; eight months later she died suddenly and left her husband five million dollars. On August 6, 1918, Mr. Bingham bought the Courier-Journal and the Louisville Times. At almost the same time the Jockey Club was being organized with both Mr. Brown and Mr. Bingham on the board, and shortly after, in February, 1919, Jim became president of the National Bank of Kentucky.

Central Kentucky is one of the principal districts for the culture of Burley tobacco from which American cigarettes are made. By 1921, following the inflated prices of the war and increased acreage, the tobacco farmers were in trouble and leaf had fallen as low as a cent a pound. Mr. Bingham promoted the Burley Tobacco Growers Co-operative, but they could get no money. The Louisville banks were not inclined to help and this offered Mr. Brown a great opportunity. In January, 1922, a meeting of tobacco farmers was held in Lexington and at this meeting Mr. Bingham announced that the War Finance Corporation would lend ten million dollars if necessary, that he himself would pledge a million and that Mr. Brown's National Bank of Kentucky

would not only lend the bank's limit but would rediscount a million and a half dollars' worth of country bank paper as well. This piece of business not only forced the other Louisville bankers into line and to acknowledge Jim's pre-eminence; it made his name in rural Kentucky.

When the co-operative presently fell on evil days its misfortunes never touched Jim. Around him gathered a group of fervent admirers. Though Mr. Brown was distinctly not one of those old Louisville families, graveled in dignity and dullness, those families were interested in him, for it seemed as though he were going to make money for everybody. His mergers and his deals spouted dollars; he was, in fact, the works. Not only did he become a great man, but a man of mystery as well. He was known as the nocturnal banker. Rising late at his Cherokee Park home, he would "go to town in the evening to a branch of his National Bank. There he would sit at the desk of a vice-president and with barely the scratch of a pen direct his myriad affairs, political, financial and mercantile . . . There at midnight, or later, his business associates would have to go if they wanted to talk with him." He did not go to New York or Washington; people had to come to him. Representatives of New York banks would cool their heels for hours, until Mr. Brown signified that he was ready to see them. Farther than Cincinnati or French Lick he would not go. It was at French Lick that he did his splendid entertaining-there would sometimes be as many as fifty or sixty in his party at the Gorge Inn-and Mr. Brown would generously pay the gambling losses of them all.

Before long Mr. Bingham and Mr. Brown fell out, and Mr. Bingham's name disappeared from the board of the

Jockey Club. The reasons for the falling out were hazy. It was said that Mr. Bingham yearned to be governor and that Mr. Brown wouldn't have it. Other rumors had it that Mr. Bingham didn't find the tone of the Jockey Club exactly as he wanted it. At all events, Mr. Bingham's papers became the opposition: they opposed with all their might but never managed to back a winner until the crash brought down Mr. Brown. The Jockey Club was extremely powerful. One legislature had thirty members openly in the employ of the Jockey Club and the Racing Commission. In 1923—the year in which Harry Sinclair's Zev won the Derby—a traveling salesman turned congressman was made governor, despite the blasts of the Courier-Journal. As a counterblast Mr. Brown in 1924 bought the Louisville Herald and then the Post and merged them.

The career of Mr. Brown's newspaper-like the Bank of Kentucky, it is gone now-was startling. There were fantastic circulation drives, alley fights between the minions of Mr. Bingham and Mr. Brown; the Herald-Post's city room is recalled as a madhouse. The paper imported an Indian brave, Chief Thunderwater, who was received by a police band, addressed the school children, and inducted the ex-traveling salesman governor into tribal membership. The Bingham papers exposed Thunderwater and showed him a fraud. At once the chief sued for half a million dollars, claiming that the disgrace had caused him "to cry and bellow as if held in pinchers." At the trial, the Bingham people hotly denied any intention of discrediting Mr. Brown's paper. Their sole intention, said one, was to "always try in a decent journalistic way to do what we can honestly to promote our own business."

But all to no purpose. Mr. Brown may have been no success as a publisher, his papers may have swallowed up millions with nothing to show for it, but Mr. Bingham's candidates didn't get elected. The outcry against betting and the Jockey Club continued with no result. In 1928 it was dissolved and the tracks taken over by a holding company—the American Turf Association, which Mr. Brown controlled.

Meantime Mr. Brown's mergers were going on. Sometime before April, 1927, it was determined to unify the ownership of the Bank of Kentucky and the Louisville Trust Company, another revered local institution. A majority of the stockholders approved and the stock of both banks was turned over to six voting trustees. In January, 1929, the Trust Company, under Mr. Brown's eagle eye, absorbed two more local houses. Nothing like it had ever been heard of before in Louisville. In Nashville a Mr. Rogers Caldwell had erected a hierarchy of holding companies, banks, and insurance companies. It was going on all over the country.

Then came Mr. Brown's master stroke. In July, 1929, three months before the crash, there was set up a Delaware corporation, the BancoKentucky Corporation, which became in effect a huge holding company controlling the Bank of Kentucky, the Louisville Trust Company, and various other banks in Kentucky and Ohio. This was the crown of Jim's work. He had—or so it seemed—made a blend of Milton Smith and James Guthrie. He had become the greatest man in Louisville beyond a doubt. The amen corners in the Seelbach and the Brown Hotel discussed him incessantly; his eccentricities were fabulous and so were his deals. Bellhops told of his pleasure in seeing a revolving door

go round; he would even pay a doorman just to turn it. Despite the attacks of the Bingham papers and the bilious envy of numerous persons, a host of Louisvillians, having profited already at Mr. Brown's hands, firmly believed that he would shower down more gold upon them. There was in Louisville a brokerage house presided over by a lady; she was Mr. Brown's agent in many of his private transactions. She figured later at his trial.

October, 1929, brought the crash and, unknown to the public, the Bank of Kentucky was in trouble. Over a period of years the Comptroller of the Currency had been writing agitated letters about various loans; these letters, it was later charged, were "tucked away in an out-of-the-way corner of the bank." It must have been embarrassing for the comptroller to catechize a banker who was the State boss as well. Inside the bank it was plain that something would have to be done, and in May, 1930, a curious deal took place whereby an exchange of stocks was to be made between BancoKentucky and Rogers Caldwell's investment house in Nashville. This combination, it was announced, would strengthen the two institutions-no appraisal was made of Mr. Caldwell's assetsand make it possible for them to serve their patrons more zealously. No use. Toward the autumn of 1930 there were rumors; then came the crash of Caldwell and Company which rocked the entire South. In Louisville the rumors were acted upon. The bank "suffered a quiet run during the last week it was open." Its deposits at the close of business on November 8, 1930, were more than thirty-four million dollars. More than seven million dollars were withdrawn during the next seven days and about eighty per cent of the withdrawals were from two hundred and fifty accounts!

On the 13th of November a receiver was appointed in Nash-ville for Mr. Caldwell, and the jig was up. Desperately Mr. Brown sought to bolster himself (a Caldwell vice-president was unkind enough to say that his boss "had put a fast one over on Mr. Brown but that he thought that the latter 'was old enough and able enough' to take care of himself"). He sought to effect one last merger. From Louisville, Banco had moved out into Kentucky, then Ohio, and finally it had combined with Tennessee. There remained New York, and at the last minute Mr. Brown tried to merge with the Transamerica Company, the creation of Mr. Amadeo Giannini, who had reached from California to New York to Milan with his banks. Thus in spirit, the dust of George Keats, once a director of the Bank of Kentucky, might be carried back to Italy to rejoin in death that of his brother John.

But it was too late. No more in the dark watches would Mr. Brown be able to leave the Gorge Inn and—if he were so moved—watch the constellations wheeling over French Lick and murmur the words of the director's brother: "Bright star, would I were steadfast as thou art." No. On the 16th of November, 1930, the National Bank of Kentucky closed its doors and went to join Nicholas Biddle and James Guthrie in the shades. The reign of James B. Brown was over.

But where the carcass is—Banco stock was quoted in Chicago at thirteen cents—there shall the eagles be gathered together. Receiverships grew like mushrooms. Suits, countersuits, petitions, and grand juries multiplied. Within thirty days Mr. Brown had declared himself a bankrupt and presently was discharged. He was indicted by the county for embezzlement and by the government for various deeds—

including some transactions with the lady broker-"against the peace and dignity of the United States of America." (The receiver of Banco had charged that the lady had borrowed two million dollars from Banco on Mr. Brown's note and that no interest had been paid nor payment upon the principal either.) Yet despite the storm of obloquy and hatred loosed against Mr. Brown, his nerve remained unshaken. He had his followers still. Though roominghouse landladies might refer to "Jim Brown, that owdacious man," there were cab drivers who stood up for him. Many violently declared that Mr. Brown's local rivals had hounded him to his ruin, and Mr. Brown himself, at his bankruptcy proceedings, did not hesitate to say that "there was certainly a very determined effort on the part of someone or some interest to damage the Bank of Kentucky and the Louisville Trust Company and to destroy as they did the BancoKentucky Company." Mr. Brown's appearances in court were little short of personal triumphs and were plain evidence of the extraordinary hold which he had. When he and his vicepresident arrived for their arraignment on the Commonwealth charge they were early. A director of the Louisville Railway Company (serving on another case) left the jury box to shake hands. They "held a sort of informal levee until their names were called . . . Deputy sheriffs, court attachés and members of the jury hastened up to greet them and to chat informally . . . The defendants also shook hands with Asst. Commonwealth's Attorney Charles W. Logan . . . and 'Bull' Riley, Republican wheelhorse and former Police Court Bondsman."

The embezzlement trial came on with the lady broker present "in her customary black and trailed by a Negro

porter carrying an imposing stack of books and records." One day's session "proved to be a procession of social and financial leaders in and out of the witness box, none of whom failed to stop at the office of the Commissioner of Claims to collect their seventy-five cents witness fee." Mr. Brown was acquitted.

Slowly the judicial wheels revolved, with lawyers and receiverships rotating in a sort of revolving fund. The Banker's Trust Company had twin receivers, one a Democrat and the other a Republican. Within a year the cost of making photostat records in a single suit had reached \$35,000; another bank receiver had in eighteen months used up \$42,-656 in expenses against \$45,689 in receipts. Finally—at one juncture counsel had dolefully "called the court's attention to the fact that litigation over the Jones National Bank of Nebraska had lasted twenty-three years"-the Jarndyce of all the Jarndyces, the suit of the receiver of the Bank of Kentucky against the directors was called. That there should be no doubt of the Court's detachment in the case, a Federal judge was imported from Grand Rapids. The preliminary hearing was conducted with great pomp. "In judicial robes Judge Denison entered the chamber before forty to fifty of Louisville's outstanding attorneys. He was preceded by a portly Negro servant who stood as the jurist took his seat and then poured him a glass of water. When he had taken the bench Judge Denison in an even voice asked, 'Now who will be master of ceremonies?"

A decree was eventually handed down against the directors and after six years the case reached the United States Supreme Court. It was sent back to the Circuit Court which finally, in November, 1938, assessed the directors for more

than two and a half million dollars. And now the next chapter opens. What is going to happen to the luckless stockholders of BancoKentucky? Sixty-seven per cent of the deposits of the National Bank of Kentucky were paid after strenuous negotiation, and the Louisville Trust Company was reorganized. Mr. Brown was tried upon his indictments and acquitted. It was all over.

But the paper castles were gone and so was the bank, a body blow had been dealt the old families who had held the fortalice in Louisville from the days when James Guthrie led them to riches. The darkness of the depression rested on the land and in the storm of local rage and hatred Jim Brown's power and glory vanished. Mr. Brown didn't vanish; he stayed. People who had admired and worshiped him refused to speak to him, those who had taken favors in the boom days looked the other way, but the promoter's nerve did not desert him. Presently he became a banker again!

On Main Street there is a little building, a relic of a bygone day, which has been furbished up with new paint, ornamental lamps, and Venetian blinds. This is the People's Bank and there in a little office with a mulberry carpet and mahogany-tinted walls sits the president, James B. Brown, spectacles on nose, sardonically chewing a cigar. The R.F.C., which shrived so many reputations, came too late for him. It is reported that Charles G. Dawes, whose Central Republic Bank and Trust Company of Chicago was lent ninety million dollars in June, 1932, said: "Mr. Brown, whenever I think of what happened to you, my blood runs cold." The Herald-Post is gone and the Courier-Journal and Times now enjoy a complete monopoly in Louisville. But Mr. Bingham, whose love for British culture made him

ambassador to Great Britain, is dead and the old self-sufficient days of Louisville are gone. The absentee landlords are coming, a dead Louisville boy is among those who fell in defense of Madrid, and the voice of a long-subservient labor has been heard at last. On the 3d of June, 1937, the federal Labor Board held its first election in Louisville and, while the president of the company swore that he would see his business in the river before anyone told him what to do, the regional director gave out the returns: Two to one for the union. All these changes perhaps occur to Mr. Brown, as he sits in his office—a fallen monarch shorn of the admirers who used to follow him in French Lick—and looks out toward the muddy river flowing by. And the Ohio rolls to meet the Mississippi . . . and the Mississippi to meet the sea.

## III

## BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA

THE CITY OF PERPETUAL PROMISE

"Hard times come here first and stay longest."

—Old Birmingham adage

In a mountain wilderness, laid in a region devastated by war and inhabited by bankrupts, a group of speculators and industrialists in 1871 founded a city and peopled it with two races afraid of each other. This town, without parallel anywhere, was Birmingham, Alabama. Also without parallel were its natural resources; for here, lying side by side as they do nowhere else in the world, are the necessary constituents of steel-coal, iron, and limestone. Birmingham is a Southern city and now one of the most populous. The word "Southern" implies a past, a past going back to Calhoun and slavery wealth. Birmingham has no such past; when Sherman, the destroyer and rationalist, was marching from Atlanta to the sea Birmingham did not exist. Many of the frontier towns of the West were booming before Birmingham was born, and Denver, another mineral town, had visions of grandeur while Birmingham was still a cornfield and a swamp.

The story of this town, a stepchild of the Civil War,

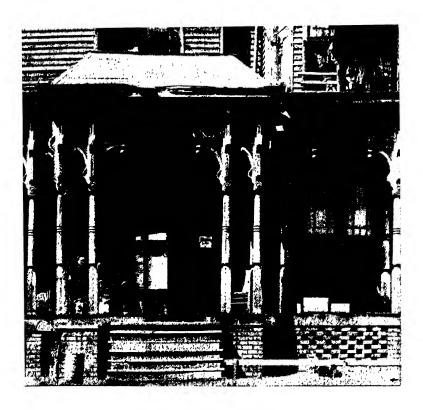
is strange; it is a city of perpetual promise. The promise lies in the almost inexhaustible mineral deposits. In 1872 Abram S. Hewitt, the ironmaster, declared: "The fact is plain. Alabama is to be the manufacturing center of the habitable globe." John W. "Bet-A-Million" Gates thought in 1906 that within twenty years Birmingham would have a population of a million and be the largest city in America not on navigable waters. It did not happen so. In 1919 Henry Clay Frick said that by 1940 Birmingham would be bigger than Pittsburgh. There is now no prospect of it. In January, 1937, an engineer told the assembled Rotary, Kiwanis, and Lions Clubs of the city that Alabama was a State to conjure with, that it was abundant in potential wealth!

On a Sunday morning, despite intense dead heat, the red stone church is full. At the door a man in a pencil-striped brown suit with a carnation in his buttonhole gives all comers a moist hand to shake. Almost two thousand people have crammed themselves into the auditorium; worshipers are compelled to sit on the steps of the balcony aisles. There are boys of twenty in seersucker suits, some in white duck pants and shirt sleeves, young girls in chip hats, middleaged women in flowered and blue and white polka-dotted voile, gaunt men in wrinkled mohair, faces with high cheekbones and a falling lock of wispy gray hair, fat men in pale-green shirts and Palm Beach suits and fancy stitched shoes. A choir of twenty-five is intoning "Mother Mine." Below, in a pallid green pulpit chair, sits the Reverend Dr. Barndollar. At a signal the congregation eases to its feet and begins, "Oh, Love That Will Not Let Me Go." The blurred, uneven chanting rises up; the hear pours in, hotter

for the yellow, brown, and pink windows with their lambs and crowns and holy books. Now the pastor rises and warms to his Mother's Day labor:

"Take this child away and nurse it for me and I will give thee thy wages. Oh, what a beautiful story, my friends. We could drop a whole continent into the ocean sooner than get along without this story. It's as fresh as the roses of the morning. The baby Moses! Did Pharaoh's daughter hesitate? Did she say, I must ask the Parent-Teachers what to do? Ah, no. . . ." All over Birmingham at this moment there are churches full, great Methodist and Baptist tabernacles, full to the doors. There is a church for every seven hundred inhabitants, the smaller Episcopalian ones with their iron and steel sprinkled congregations setting the tone for the community.

In the afternoon, over beyond Red Mountain which walls in the sprawling city, a local capitalist has opened his grounds to visitors. His mansion, built in imitation of a Roman temple, is cylindrical in shape, made of bits of ore cemented together. By the steps of the mansion stand two black servants in white jackets. One has a felt hat under his arm, the other carries a cap in his hand. Each has pinned to his jacket a green felt label embroidered in yellow with the Roman standard, the letters SPQR, and his name; Lucullus for one, Caius Cassius for the other. Under a tree is an elaborate sort of Roman throne, tinted green and bronze. Above, swinging from a branch, is a radio concealed in a birdhouse. Nearby are two dog houses, built like miniature Parthenons, with classic porticoes and tiny pillars. One is labeled Villa Scipio. There is a pool filled with celluloid swans and miniature galleons and schooners. Scattered about are more



1. BIRMINGHAM BOARDING HOUSE
A monument to the Iron Age.



2. BIRMINGHAM BLAST FURNACES AND WORKERS' DWELLINGS

benches, urns, and painted-plaster sculptures. Among the shrubs and pink-rose hedges trails a procession of men and women, marveling at the splendors, but tired and oppressed by the overpowering heat. Toward sundown the crowd thins out; the Fords and Chevrolets go coasting down the hill.

At last, after dark, cars begin to park at the edge of the drive that runs along Red Mountain and overlooks the city. There has been a thunderstorm, but the sky is overcast and the heat still intense. The damp air and the smoke combine to lay a dark blanket over the city, broken here and there where a string of lights shines through with piercing brightness. Not so far off are two of the Sloss furnaces; at one of them the molten iron is running a bright golden rill in the darkness. At the other the mud gun has swung into place; the run is over, and the pig machine is slowly finishing its meal, spitting out the finished pigs into railroad cars, invisible in the night. Somewhere down there in the dark is the jail which walled up nine men whose names are known throughout the world, the most famous names in Birmingham, the Scottsboro boys. Somewhere down there is the new white courthouse that has over its door these words of Jefferson's: "Equal Justice to All Men of Whatever State or Persussion."

In the bus station a Dale County farm boy is asleep on a bench, his head hanging over from weariness, feet with heavy shoes sprawling, the Bull Durham tag dangling from the pocket of his worn chambray shirt, his seersucker pants torn and dirty. He doesn't hear the singsong of the little boy outside, playing a banjo and singing "Pennies From Heaven" to the loafers. Off toward Pratt City, the African Apostles of God are in the middle of evening service. The light is dim inside the disheveled little church and the chanting rises up in a humming moan:

Oh, when the sun refuse to shine
When the sun refuse to shine
Lord, I want to be in that number
When the saints go marchin' in.
When the moon goes down in blood
When the moon goes down in blood
Lord, I want to be in that number
When the saints go marchin' in.

Far off the overcast sky is lighted up with a fitful glow, now dim and sinking down, now ruddy and flaming up—the furnaces at Ensley and Fairfield, enclaves of the Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad Company, property of the great absentee landlord, the United States Steel Corporation. When the landlord speaks the people listen. What is man, that they at 71 Broadway are mindful of him?

2

There are in the United States some ninety-four cities with a population of 100,000 or over. Birmingham, at the time of the last census, had 259,000 inhabitants. But in the list of those ninety-four towns Birmingham, according to the most recent figures, stood at the very bottom in per capita public expenditures; it was eighth from the bottom in the amount spent on education, sixth from the bottom in appropriations for public health. It had one of the highest homicide rates in the country—not long ago it was known as the Murder Capital of the World. Its venereal disease

rate was similarly high—one survey found more syphilis among the Negroes than the whites, more gonorrhea among the whites than among the Negroes. In 1935 the venereal disease rate, in proportion to population, was higher than in any other city in the country but one. It numbered more illiterates among its inhabitants than any other city in the country with a population between two and three hundred thousand. Among those same cities Birmingham had in 1935 by a wide margin the lowest spendable income; its housing condition was about as bad. Facing the Southern Railway station in Birmingham is a huge sign, "The Magic City." Magic City of Perpetual Promise! What are the reasons, the causes of unfulfillment? They go far back, back beyond the days when Birmingham was a wilderness, to the days when the State of Alabama did not even exist.

Outside capital wanted for investment in Alabama! It is a familiar story now; it was familiar long before Alabama became a State. In 1790 some of the planters along the eastern seaboard were worried. Slaves picked out cotton seed by hand, the crop was of no account, and land was getting sour. The future value of Sambo and Ulysses was in doubt. But within three years Eli Whitney had devised the cotton gin and that changed everything. Before long there were visions of immense profits in cotton, the money value of slave flesh climbed, and, to the speculative gentry, the land west of the mountains looked like an Eden. In 1795 a little group of revolutionary fathers-Northern capitalists and Southern planters-bribed the Georgia legislature into selling them almost the whole of what is now Alabama and Mississippi for a cent and a half an acre. Before their bubble burst two million dollars of Boston money were supposed to have been sunk in the scheme. That was how Northern capital first came to Alabama.

After the war of 1812 and when Jackson had defeated the Indians, the real settlers came. Over the mountains went younger sons with gangs of slaves to take up the choice grants. Down from Tennessee came Jackson's veterans. New Englanders came and embraced slavery with Calvinist fervor. Poor farmers—including the father of Jefferson Davis—trailed along. Most of these were speedily pushed out of the rich black-soiled belt toward the gullies and the pine barrens; many of them edged north into the foothills of Alabama where the red earth then meant nothing more than dyestuff for buckskin.

In 1819 Alabama became a State. There were forty years to go before the Civil War. The land along the turbid streams was cleared, log cabins were built, and very gradually the cotton boom got under way. The elegants and the swells in the Cotton Kingdom lived in New Orleans and Charleston and Richmond. "Better to be dead in St. Philip's churchyard in Charleston," says the historian, "than to be alive in the provinces." But there was money to be made in Alabama, get-rich-quick money as good as anything in the California diggings, and the warehouses of Mobile were crammed "with the great staple that controls the commerce of Christendom." Precious few gor the money. In 1850 a thousand families throughout the Cotton States divided an income of over fifry million dollars. A middle class was almost nonexistent, towns few and far. Below the planters and separated from them by a wide gulf was the great white mass which in the same year, 1850, had an average income of less than a hundred dollars a family. In Alabama most of

these families lived in the northern part of the State. (In 1935, almost a century later, the per capita income in Alabama was \$138!)

The trouble with that fifty-million-dollar income was that it was so precarious. A few planters made big moneythe income of Wade Hampton the year before the war is said to have been a quarter of a million dollars-but it was actually a race with time. Endless commissions, drayage, freight, warehouse, insurance, and interest charges are into the income; mortgages steadily mounted. The planters controlled the Federal government but they couldn't control the Northern and English banks, and that's where they had to go for money. They were passionately absorbed in politics and could listen for hours to Yancey's burning rhetoric. The demand for cotton continued to mount, and through the forties and fifties the debts did also; but at home on the plantation all seemed well. The stars stayed in their courses, the earth's diurnal course was constant, the soft spring was eternally followed by the hot breathless summer and the slow-coming chill of autumn. There wasn't much learning even among the rich. Planters refused to be taxed to teach the children of small farmers the useless arts of reading and writing-and an occasional newspaper, the almanac, and a set of Walter Scott bought from a book agent were enough. In the northern Alabama counties a judge on horseback brought what law was needed and at the crossroads circuit-rider preachers with apocalyptic zeal proved slavery out of Holy Writ-the slaves whom the little whites hated.

And all the while, as the years sped swiftly by, industry was growing in the North, the countinghouses were eternally busy. By the bends of streams red-brick factories sprang

up, the coal beds were opened, the chimneys smoked, the ironworks expanded. Wealth grew, population grew, the immigrants were pouring in, and the railroads were reaching-out toward the West to become the highways for the grain that before had gone down the great river to the Gulf.

The planters viewed these developments with alarm, drawing bitter contrasts between their slaves and Northern factory operatives. They built a wall round themselves, shut the loathsome Abolitionist literature out of the mails, and suppressed all utterance that questioned the basis of their wealth, the slave. But no wall, no sealed-up isolation could hide the fact that the land was once more growing poor and that the control of their credit was elsewhere. The prosperity of a little group, bought at the expense of enslaved blacks and poor whites, was tottering. A few Southerners argued for industry and the Alabama legislature was persuaded to set a professor of geology to making a survey of the State. But only a handful read his report which described the coal and iron deposits in the northern counties. No; cotton was king and railroads and machinery were of the devil.

But above the Ohio the industrialists and the bankers were straining at their bonds; when at last the election of an Illinois lawyer to the Presidency signified that North and West had come to terms, the planters chose to fight. The northern half of Alabama, the little farmers, hated the planters and opposed secession. But they could be dealt with and were. The war began.

By a stroke of priceless irony the planters' Confederacy, based upon the theory of States' Rights, became so desperate for munitions that it granted a subsidy to an Alabama engineer named John Milner to build a railway from Montgomery northward to tap the mineral deposits. An ironworks was set up at Selma, Alabama, to manufacture ordnance for the beleaguered planters. Too late. Milner's railway failed to reach the mineral, and in 1865 the Selma ironworks fell before the bombardment of a battery equipped by the Chicago Board of Trade. The Confederacy went down and the planters—apparently—with it. This was the bequest that the slave system of Alabama left, out of which a new beginning must be made:

The majority of the white population were poor farmers who had never made a decent living, were largely illiterate, had loathed the war. "They want," said a reporter in '65, "to organize and receive recognition from the United States government in order to get revenge . . . they 'wish the power to hang, shoot, and destroy in retaliation for the wrongs they have endured'; they hate the 'big nigger holders' whom they accuse of bringing on the war and who, they are afraid, would get into power again." The slaves, the other large fraction of the population, were for the most part illiterate also. At a stroke they had ceased to be draught animals representing invested capital and had become "free" men.

What was going to happen? People had become habituated to a one-crop agriculture that made it difficult for them to feed themselves. The planters, depending on outside capital, had ruled the roost before the Civil War; who would rule it now? If the South was to have any healthy growth at all it was essential that some fundamental reconciliation between white and black be undertaken. The task was formidable, few were interested, popular education scarcely existed, there was no money. Energetic young Southerners

took one look at the prospect and began the exodus to New York and fortune which has never stopped. In the end it turned out that the planters, depending on outside capital, ruled the roost once more. The Union was preserved, the rich and triumphant sisters took back the erring ones—broke. On the ruins of the Cotton Kingdom there was pieced together, out of the old timbers, a new slave system. The botched Reconstruction government ushered in the new dispensation that so strangely resembled the old, and in the midst of the confusion Birmingham was born.

3

Up there in the Jones Valley among the hills of Jefferson County, hidden by the pines and the blackjacks, cropping out in the dark gullies, were the coal and iron. Here and there had been primitive charcoal furnaces in past years. Barely was the war over when Milner the engineer began drumming up interest in the railroad that Confederate subsidies failed to complete. He found allies and made a deal with a Boston promoter named Stanton, who was building another railway across Alabama to Chattanooga, where Yankee speculators were starting a real estate boom. The two roads were to make a junction in the mineral region and a joint townsite speculation was platted. Not far from the townsite was the village of Elyton. As the roads pushed on toward their meeting, Stanton quietly changed his right of way so that it would pass near Elyton and took options on the land. Discovering this, Milner slowed down his construction until the day the options expired and then—with outside help—took them up himself. Thereupon, on January 26,

1871, the Elyton Land Company (in the guise of its successor, the Birmingham Realty Company, it exists today) was organized and the speculation was named Birmingham. The Reconstruction government was in the saddle at Montgomery, and with the aid of Negro voters, brought in for the purpose, the junction was presently declared the seat of Jefferson County and the paper town was ready for business. It was, said one of the promoters, as he surveyed the cornfield and swamp, "a perfect Mahomet's paradise of lovely women."

Now in the mud roads that pass for streets the speculators hurry back and forth giving sales talks to one another. There's millions in it. Nobody knows much about what the mineral is or where, but it's there. They have got their railroad, such as it is, built to the townsite and a little beyond; but they have no northern connection. They live in a couple of boxcars beside the railroad track and make plans. Cincinnati money has already showed up and annexed a furnace. Do you know where there's some money? Stanton, the promoter, in company with Russell Sage, almost gets their road away from them, but in the nick of time the Louisville & Nashville, gorged with the profits from Federal war contracts, agrees to take over the unfinished construction.

Grant is in the White House, the Gilded Age is dawning, and as they watch it the Birmingham speculators' mouths water. The factory system, now fully fastened on New England, spreads rapidly; the mansard mansion on the hill with the plate-glass windows is the mark of success. Judge Thomas Mellon has just opened his bank in Pittsburgh and has put his son Andy in the real estate business. Carnegie is busy with the Keystone Bridge Company; in England Bessemer

has perfected his steel process. Into Pittsburgh are herded the crowds of immigrants, labor for the iron mills. The age of iron and steel, of rampant industry and the greedy gutting of a continent, has begun.

The capital investment that was building more and more plant, the threads that tied it all together joined in the countinghouses of New York and Boston and Philadelphia. Northern capitalists were picking their way through the South, hunting up old cotton factor correspondents and making deals. Henry Bradley Plant, who had prudently become a Confederate citizen in order to hold on to his Southern investments, was busily buying up little Southern railroads at sheriff sales and piecing his system together. Other bargain hunters appeared at Birmingham.

The speculative fever mounted, but barely had building begun when Black Friday and the panic of '73 knocked the bottom out of the town. Cows fed upon the Louisville & Nashville's single track and the adage was first heard: "Hard times come first to Birmingham and stay the longest." Birmingham from the very start was a speculation above speculations, for as far as the manufacture of iron was concerned, it was on the fringes of an industry already well established in the North. It was inevitable that alternate booms and crashes would shake it, and those few who dreamed that a fair metropolis could be built reckoned without their hosts. It was, to be exact, a place where speculators by ruthless exploitation might wring out a fortune; it was individualism turned loose in a region filled with bankrupts. In Birmingham the exploits of Gould and Vanderbilt and Fisk were repeated in little-in little because there was less to get.

When business began to revive in the North the revival was

slowly felt in Birmingham, and one after another Northern iron men arrived to join the group of Southern speculators. They were a curious assortment and within some ten years there had moved in an Alabama ex-storekeeper who had dabbled in railroads before the war, an engineer from Palmyra, New York, who had come down during the Reconstruction to run a bank in Selma, a Tennessee ironmaker, a war veteran from Iowa who had been a carpetbag receiver of an Alabama national bank, and a Memphis lawyer who had inherited a million dollars, written a world famous pamphlet on taxation and was interested in stables.

These men began setting up furnaces here and there, sinking coal holes and lumbering off the pine. The mineral lands constantly changed hands, with the speculators climbing in and out of bed with one another, incorporating today and reincorporating tomorrow. A picture gradually emerged. First there was the town of Birmingham with its land companies and auctions. Ringed about it were other speculations as the promoters opened mines and set up furnaces and laid out towns. Farther out, the coal beds were opened, making still another ring of settlements. In the center of these concentric circles, in the red-brick business blocks of Birmingham, the promoters had their offices, and on the slopes of Red Mountain they built their jigsaw and scroll work mansions.

Of the promoters perhaps the best known was Henry DeBardeleben, a plunger who roved the region with the others, organizing towns and coal, iron, and land companies by the dozen. In order to start the town of Bessemer at a swoop, DeBardeleben bought up a section of the New Orleans Cotton Exposition and hurried the buildings to his town-

site. Thus the Jamaica building became part of a rolling mill and the Montezuma building did duty as a hotel. No less ambitious was Enoch Ensley, who in '86 slapped together a town, capitalized it at ten million dollars, and named it for himself. "I intend," said he, surveying the pine scrub, "to fill this valley with manufacturing plants and here I will build the Bank of Ensley." But the bubble burst as so many of them did and the townsite was finally bid in for \$16,000. Building did not begin until a decade later; now the town is a part of Birmingham, a dingy suburb with blocks of disheveled store buildings and acres of wretched workers' dwellings in all stages of ruin.

So the town teetered back and forth. Pig iron could be made cheaply but it had to be shipped north to market. Where in the South could iron be sold? Where were the wages that might go to buy goods? Furnaces would go into blast, run awhile, accumulate a mound of pigs, and then shut down. There were periodic dashes to New York to raise a little cash and promote another deal. A visitor with some money would get off the train in Birmingham and in five minutes the town knew it. Someone had his handbag; someone else was offering a little drink. This would be followed by a sightseeing trip around the district, and perhaps a mine would change hands. Little by little the companies began to merge; the necessity for capital was forcing them together.

Then in 1886 and 1887 occurred two events of decisive importance. The first was the appearance of the Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad Company, controlled in New York and a favorite with stock gamblers. This company acquired a huge block of coal, ore, and limestone lands and became

the first landlord in the district. Ensley, DeBardeleben, and others had interests in it. The second event was the establishment in 1887 of the Interstate Commerce Commission after the long agitation of the Western farmers for relief from railroad exploitation. The Commerce Commission set about the regulation of freight rates and the maintenance of competition.

It was not foreseen at the time that the control of the railways and the control of the iron and steel manufacture might eventually come together in the same hands, hands that already controlled railways and industrial investments of far greater importance north of the Ohio, where industry already had a running start of two generations. Nor was it realized, what was true at the time, that the promoters of Birmingham were becoming the willing and eager agents of this distant control, agents whose business it was to exploit their neighbors and drive both whites and blacks deeper into the mire.

In 1883 a Senate Committee on Capital and Labor arrived to hold hearings, and among the witnesses, concerned with the servant problem, was a voluble Birmingham lady. White help she found impossible. "I wouldn't give them room," she said. "We would all go distracted if we had them for servants. Their only idea of doing work for us is to do it as they do it for themselves, which is no way at all. . . . I wouldn't be without negro servants. We are used to abusing them too. It is like home to have the colored ones around us, even though they are trifling. But as to these poor whites . . . they are the most hopeless, helpless, trifling set of people in the entire South. There are a great many of them. I don't know but one thing could be done with the women of that

race to make them work and that is to employ them in factories. . . . I am going to make myself as comfortable as I can with the darkies under existing circumstances."

The lady may have thought she was discussing the servant problem, but what she was really doing was laying wide open the condition of the greater part of the population of both Birmingham and Alabama. In this boom town planted in a ruined slave economy all of the pestilent inheritances from the living dead, blended with the worst excesses familiar to Northern industry, could be seen at work. The vision of perpetual promise was generally confined to a strict self-interest. "Before God, I will be damned before I put my hand in my pocket for anything," said one of the speculators when asked for a contribution. And so it was that the promoters and their families, who pieced together a society of their own on the slope of Red Mountain, built their fortunes out of the company town, the company store, the deputy sheriff, the fee system, and the convict lease. The iron market consisted of the leavings of Pittsburgh; the courts of last resort were the banking houses of New York.

4

Near the furnaces and the coal mines the company towns grew up, shacks thrown together helter-skelter, suffocating in dead summer, damp and cold in winter. Staggering rows of these hideous shanties climbed the dark ravines or gathered in the hollows round the shed that housed the commissary, the company store. Into these desolate sinks there trickled in steadily Truebloods, Glovers, Ivys, and Lydells, all the gaunt descendants of the men who fought the Redcoats at King's

Mountain. With them came their wives and children. Into other such hamlets came black men, Coopers, Reeses, Raifords, and Purifoys-where you goin', boy?-with their wives and children. From under a ragged quilt the wife got up at three to make a breakfast of cornbread and fatback; for long before daylight the men were off, a wavering procession of drugged figures, stumbling along in the dark to the mine or mill. It was long after sundown when they got back. Money was unknown. In the morning a grimy child was sent by his mother to the commissary. At a little window a gimlet-eyed man would look in a book and then hand out a few cents in "clacker," imitation money drawn against the man's time, and the child would get the meal and molasses that would keep life going for another day. The defense of the commissary was that often stores were distant; it also enabled the coal and iron men to extract profits as high as twenty per cent out of the celebrated cheap labor. No man was ever out of debt; he never knew how much he earned. They were a superstitious people with a lurid circuit-rider faith of brimstone and fire; but the Truebloods had little use for the company preachers they had to pay for, nor did the Davises either. They feared strangers, drank moonshine when they could get it, were given to sudden rages and violence; many could neither read nor write. Some of the towns, patrolled by deputies, were almost impossible to get in or out of. In such cesspools generations were born and died. There was no end to it; cut off from all light or hope, the company town was the whole of life.

The final nail in the coffin was the convict lease. The lease, well known in Alabama before the Civil War, was promptly taken over by Colonel Milner and other coal and iron men

and installed in the Birmingham district. For more than fifty years the lonely mine stockades in the woods were a region of the damned. The men died like flies of tuberculosis, the torture was used, there were killings and cripplings, with bodies dumped into holes in the woods. The sight of the whipping boss at work was never to be forgotten. The child of a superintendent, awakened in the night by the screams of a Negro being flogged, was haunted by the cry: "Master, don't hit me no more." To swell the supply the sheriff's office used decoys to start crap games, gathered in the victims and auctioned them off to the mines, often without trial. "A little Negro boy was arrested and as he wasn't worth sending to the mines, the Deputy sold him to a farmer for a dollar." It reached a point in 1912 when-with the city government almost broke-the shrievalty of Jefferson County had become the most lucrative office in the State with a fee income of between fifty and eighty thousand dollars a year. In town children became accustomed to the sight of men in fetters cleaning the streets and to the sound of clinking chains at the back door when the garbage was carried away. When a convict miner was worn out and useless as labor, his sentence would sometimes be canceled and he would make his way into town. There are families in Birmingham today descended from such wrecks, which boast "murderers in the third generation." Leased convicts were not only profitable but they couldn't strike; there were never any "picnics or funerals to distract them," and they were one more means of riveting labor to the district. Attempts at labor organization were savagely suppressed. To prevent it, one operator tried to hire no one who knew how to read. He failed, he



3. MRS. JULIA RUSSELL IN 1937

"I appreciate very much," she wrote in 1923, "the names and record of the senare vote on the convict lease. My purpose in keeping them is that when a lease advocate sticks his head up for office I will know him and cut his head off as far as my influence goes."

ORLD'S HIGHEST STANDARD OF LIVING



4. THE AMERICAN WAY IN BIRMINGHAM, 1937

said, because "there aren't enough illiterate niggers to go around."

Meanwhile, through the eighties and the nineties, the land where this cheap labor came from, the Alabama farms, was in upheaval. The Republican carpetbaggers were gone, the Bourbon remnants of the planter families were in the saddle at Montgomery; but things were no better. The farmers were racked with poverty, their land showed it, and they were desperate. Wagons bearing whole families drove for miles in the burning heat to attend the Alliance mass meetings; thousands of gaunt men with wives in faded sunbonnets listened raptly when told that Alabama farm home had become "the most God-forsaken place on earth," and that "four more years of Democratic rule in Alabama and we'll look like Republicans." As this fervor resolved into Populism the Bourbons became alarmed. Through manipulation and intimidation most of the Negroes since Reconstruction had voted as they had been told, if they voted at all. But if the farmers in their desperation should reach out for this voteas they were doing in Texas-then the fat was in the fire. As the cry of white supremacy was raised, lynchings in Alabama mounted to their high mark-twenty-four in '91 and the same in '92. Bourbon exhortation took effect; in Birmingham Colonel Milner contributed a pamphlet to the cause: "White Men of Alabama Stand Together." The bewildered, harassed farmers began to yield, the panic became a rout. In '95 at the Atlanta Cotton Exposition, Booker Washington of Alabama announced the Negro's surrender, and in the next year, the Waterloo of agrarians everywhere, the Bourbons determined to rivet their control for good and all.

The final result was the Constitution of 1901 with an

emasculated inheritance tax, a rotten-borough election system, and the restriction clauses which put the black vote out of commission. Joseph Forney Johnston, a Birmingham banker and once president of the Sloss Iron and Steel Company, was elected governor. During his term an attempt was made to sell to the Sloss Company the coal land which the Federal government had given to the University of Alabama. The attempt failed, but the move was significant. Between the Bourbons at Montgomery and the coal and iron men in Birmingham all was well; now surely, Northern capital would come without hesitation. The farmer relapsed into the apathy from which only the revived Ku-Klux could rouse him, the Negro sank lower in his cropperdom, the company towns round Birmingham grew fouler and more poisonous, and in New York it was rumored that George Kessler, a wine salesman and Broadway spender, had acquired control of the Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad Company.

5

On the night of November 2, 1907—in the midst of the great "banker's panic"—there was a meeting of bankers in the library of J. P. Morgan. The purpose of the meeting was to decide the fate of the Tennessee Company, known in Birmingham as the T. C. I., and before morning its acquisition by the United States Steel Corporation was assured. The competition offered by a syndicate that had erected a rail mill in Birmingham and taken a rail order for Harriman's system was ended; the Steel Corporation was now the owner of a huge and generally undeveloped property of coal and iron,

and a threat against its huge Northern plant and ore investment had been removed. The news was not received in precisely that light in Birmingham. "The U. S. Steel Corporation practically controls the steel trade in the United States," exulted General Rhodes's Birmingham News. "With enlarged and improved plants it can make steel cheaper in this district than anywhere else. Superiority of product and cheapness of manufacture will conspire soon to make the Birmingham district the largest steel manufacturing center in the universe." The vision of promise rose again like a mirage. They were Democrats all right, but as the general put it: "We voted for Bryan but prayed for Taft."

This year of 1907 showed clearly that the domination of the absentee landlord was increasing. Of the trunk lines entering Birmingham, the Southern had been put together by Morgan in the nineties. The Louisville & Nashville was acquired in 1901 by the Atlantic Coast Line in a Morgan transaction. Now through Morgan the Steel Corporation had annexed the biggest property in Birmingham. In 1907 the Alabama Power Company was organized, which—after many vicissitudes—came to rest as a subsidiary of the Commonwealth and Southern Corporation, reputedly a Morgan company. Ultimate decisions in power, transport, and industry were made at last in a distant banking house.

At almost the same time Federal legislation altered the freight rates. There was less traffic south of the Ohio than above, so higher rates were allowed the Southern railways. Rates north of the wall were lower than they were south of it. But was it possible that both Northern and Southern railways were controlled in the same banks? Was it possible that the great railroad investment north of the wall must be

protected at all costs, that the migration of manufacture to the South must be watched lest Northern traffic be threatened? Was the Northern steel investment so great that it, too, must be protected along with other great industrial establishments dominated by the same banking houses? The disorganized textile industry might balance cheap labor and high freight rates and move to Alabama and elsewhere in the South, but what else? And, finally, what about the Interstate Commerce Commission? For better or worse, the bulk of the wealth, population, and industry, the very gut of the American economy, lay north of the Ohio and east of the Mississippi. Must the Commission, acting in the public interest, take no action that would threaten this section? Was it, in sum, possible that the course of economic history had made the stability of "the American system" depend on that region and that, simultaneously, it was to the advantage of finance capital in New York that it remain so? The complicated interplay of action in Birmingham with the incessant cry for Northern capital and the wish of New York banking houses to strengthen their own interests made it plain not only that Birmingham was an outpost of New York but that Birmingham business would make its profit by a simultaneous paying of tribute and a merciless exploitation of its workers. This they did.

By 1908 the miners' families in the coal camps had reached such a desperate pass that they would take any chance, and the United Mine Workers determined to make another attempt to organize the district. There were meetings by stealth in the woods at night, the obligation was administered by candlelight in lonely gullies. The dark hollows were patrolled by deputies. Finally twenty thousand black and

white miners struck and the Tennessee Company, leading the employers, rose to smash them. With convicts working and with strikebreakers brought in, it was thought that the job could be done. More deputies were sworn in, the military were sent for. What firearms could not accomplish, cries of white supremacy and the nigger menace might.

Day by day the tension rose; a train of strikebreakers was ambushed by some of the miners, a union member was taken from a jail and strung up. "It was a daily occurrence to hear of somebody killed." At Republic, on the edge of the city, the evicted miners and their families were sheltered in tents and the crazed hysteria in the city focused on it. At a mass meeting held in a Birmingham theater it was proposed that the leaders of the strike be lynched, and at last the governor, Braxton Bragg Comer, a Birmingham industrialist, took action. He drove out to where the miners were assembled and from the running-board of his car told them that their strike was over. The National Guard was ordered to tear down the tents and it was threatened that thereafter all strikers could be arrested as vagrants. What would the miners do?

At this juncture Tom Lewis, the national president of the union, arrived. (It should be remembered that John Mitchell had but just retired from the office, the union was the most powerful labor organization in the country and its prestige was high.) Old Birmingham miners describe how Lewis was met at the train with the demand that he order his vice-president, who was in command, to declare the strike over. He obeyed; the miners' delegates were summoned to town, and there their officers told them all was lost. It was a frightful spectacle. Miners wept convulsively, pleading with their

leaders not to desert them, but it was no use. The strike was broken, the national officials left, and a disorderly rabble of cowed and beaten men and women made their way back to the coal camps. And while they were on their way the companies were engaged in devising a house lease that provided that the "Lessor may at any time forbid ingress and egress over the adjoining premises of Lessor to reach said premises to any and all persons other than Lessee and the members of his family living with him." Certainly that ought to tie the cheap labor to the district. When, at the national miners' convention the next year, the vice-president was charged with deserting the Alabama miners, all he could say was: "We who live in well-organized districts and who are surrounded by better influences and have more industrial liberty cannot conceive of the conditions there."

With the labor menace disposed of, Birmingham and the patchwork of villages, company towns, and mine and furnace settlements moved toward consolidation and finally accomplished it in 1910. It was a strange picture. In one section were the Avondale cotton mills and their mill hands. Close at hand was a Sloss-Sheffield village, a hideous patch of unpainted shacks, tumbled fences, and slag dumps-Colonel Maben, the president, didn't believe in "coddling"which was swallowed up, just as it was, into the new city. In the center of everything were the office buildings where the steel, coal, and iron men had their headquarters; on Red Mountain were their residences; and scattered about were tracts bought by local speculators and crammed with "nigger houses," then and now described as among the most profitable investments in the city. With 50,000 people on the fringes of Birmingham without a sewage system, with living conditions beyond belief, the fight began to dodge the taxes inevitable in consolidation. "Leave us a nest egg for the steel plant," said a Sloss-Sheffield official, "which would redound to the greater glory of Birmingham." Oh, promise perpetual! Counsel for Republic Steel had similar views. Some escaped and some did not, but the Tennessee Company's Ensley works were left safely outside the city limits and they are outside today.

6

It was inevitable that there would be individuals in the grimy steel and iron town who would not remain silent in an atmosphere where the word "democracy" was an obscene jest. Here was an irascible lawyer whose reason could not stomach what he saw, there a druggist haunted by the convict lease, there a schoolteacher whose mind could not accept the "scientific" demonstrations of black inferiority. There were a few resolute Negroes who struggled through the restriction clauses and managed to hold on to their vote. There were the occasional labor organizers who so often took their lives in their hands. There were "Lane, the lawyer, Park, the doctor, and Samuel Ullman," three men who were wont to show up in lonesome isolation at meetings attended only by women who wanted "to get something done." And there were the Christians.

The Methodist and Baptist denominations spread themselves out, vast amorphous growths of fundamentalist doctrine; to the church belonged the revivalist task of expounding the joys of the hereafter to men and women who would have none on this earth. The other denominations trailed in

their wake. Let there be no mention of what lay all about them. No. "Let them confine themselves to Jesus Christ and him crucified" was the constant admonition of one of the ironmasters. And with rare exceptions the parsons did as they were bid. But the faith sheltered some recalcitrant specimens and among them was Julia Strudwick Tutwiler. This woman, the daughter of a man who believed in the education of women, had by 1876 studied in the North and abroad and was certified to teach in the schools of Prussia. She returned to Alabama and eventually came to live in Birmingham. What was done for the education of women was undertaken and largely brought about by her, while simultaneously she raged against the rummies, wielded the flail of the W.C.T.U., and "composed poems for her own pleasure." Her agitation for the suffrage was constant, she never ceased harping on the convict lease. Age drew on and found her a pompadoured spinster, careless and untidy in dress, oblivious of public opinion. In 1916, close to death and her strength dwindling, she looked back over her life and said: "There have been times when I had to say to myself, 'God and one make a majority."

The influence of this woman and some others like her reached out of Birmingham and into the countryside and eventually touched Julia Russell, a farmer's wife. In 1923 a Birmingham woman wrote Mrs. Russell and asked her if she could do anything to help the campaign against the lease. Mrs. Russell assented. "I am in need of petitions and literature," she wrote. "Could use more than I have tomorrow at an all-day singing. If possible I would like to get it in the early morning mail tomorrow. I never attend to business on Sunday except the kind my Lord attended to. He relieved

both physical and mental pain on the Sabbath. This is what we are doing. And saving our own souls. For to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin. Yours for better government." The campaign progressed and she wrote again: "I appreciate very much the names and record of the senate vote on the convict lease. My purpose in keeping them is that when a lease advocate sticks his head up for office I will know him and cut his head off as far as my influence goes." She recalled the convict rebellion at the Banner mine: "I see God's hand in each development in our prison conditions. Those leaders in the Banner mutiny were heroes. It was God who had them risk their lives in order to let the dull minded see what was being tolerated by the people. Yours for humane government, Julia Russell."

The lease persisted; a member of the legislature who supported it, wrote: "I se (sic) nothing to do but put them [the convicts] in the fattning pen and put on more taxes to feed and cloath &c them, therefore I am opposed to the plan." But years of agitation and forlorn hopes were making headway. A man demanded the exhumation of the body of his son to prove that he had been beaten to death. A warden at the Flat Top mine was charged with injecting poison into a dead convict's body after he had been immersed in a laundry vat. Finally the opposition gave way, the lease was abolished, and on July 1, 1928, the last convicts left Flat Top. And not so long after, a Birmingham coal operator came to the woman who had engineered the last of the interminable agitations and said: "You were right. The bottom has fallen out of the coal market, and had I convicts still on lease, I would have to pay the State whether I mined coal or not. As

it is, all I have to do is to shut the mines and discharge the men. You have saved my life."

7

Through the boom years Birmingham felt the same urban growth as that known throughout the country. For a decade the red-brick business blocks had been giving ground; the "heaviest corner on earth" was buttressed by four tall office buildings. The speculative excitement that seized other American communities was felt also, and people whose traditional form of speculation was land embarked on the Florida boom. With a degree of deliberation the manufacture of steel went on. The problem presented by the Birmingham ore with its high percentage of phosphorus had already been solved by the open-hearth processes and the Steel Corporation's various Birmingham plants underwent some rationalization. But singularly enough, despite the enormous mineral resources, the corporation's expansion there was very slow. If labor was so cheap, if costs were so low, why was not more steel made? For many years the price of steel manufactured in Birmingham was the price fixed at Pittsburgh with an added five dollars, the famous Pittsburgh plus. Why was this? Was it because of Minnesota ore leases and the gigantic Northern plant investment, or because the South was so poor a market, or both? Was the corporation milking its Birmingham colony to carry along other plants that did not do so well? It was far from clear.

Because skilled labor would not come to a region where the dwellings were so incredibly bad and where epidemics were constant, the corporation embarked on a program of sanitation and housing and built a hospital. Some of the other industrialists did likewise. But this paternalism implied no relaxation of labor control, for in Birmingham and throughout the South a renewed campaign for capital was under way. If the Tennessee Company, holding to the wage differential for dear life, paid the highest wage in the district, what must wages elsewhere in the district have been! Like the song of perpetual promise, the chanting of the capital hunters went up. Some recalled how the legislation passed in the administration of Governor Comer, the cotton spinner, had been printed and distributed throughout the world. Would the money come now?

Early in the twenties the Manufacturer's Record stated the case: "The Solid South means security for every manufacturer trembling under the whiplash of the anarchistic labor leaders. . . . Some have feared that the movement of New England cotton mills to the South would be followed by the bringing of New England mill labor. These New England mill owners, however, are fleeing to the South to get away from the operatives which now work New England mills." The Alabama Power Company, seeking an outlet for its electricity, promoted a series of cotton mills, to be administered from Birmingham, and the bond circulars advertised, among other inducements, an "abundance of competent labor of Anglo-Saxon extraction with a low-rate of turnover." The same theme was pursued by George Gordon Crawford, the president of the Tennessee Company. "The South," he declared, "is today the greatest, best, and cheapest labor market in the United States." "There have been invested in our State hundreds of million dollars," said the Power Company, "in such enterprises as the large buildings in our cities; the

railroads and steamship lines; telephone and telegraph; the great iron, steel, and coal developments, many of the cotton mills and many others; our State and municipal securities are almost entirely held beyond the State. Would those who decry 'foreign capital' now desire to close the State to investments and developments by those who live beyond the State?"

Who indeed? The drain of interest and dividends, the low taxes, and a subsistence-wage level could not but promise a revived and prosperous South. Did local magnates suggest that labor organization might help redress this balance? They did not. Did they move on Washington in a phalanx to demand alteration in the freight differential? They did not. Cotton Tom Heslin was not only derided as the laughing-stock of the Senate; he was feared lest his record as an agrarian radical would frighten investments away from the State. And meantime the Ku-Klux slourished like a bay tree.

One result of low wages was to throw the workers into the clutches of the loan shark. What the loan company did not get, the installment seller was able to snatch from the gullible. Birmingham has been and is a loan shark's paradise, and to follow a wage earner around the circle is bewildering. Mr. Crawford, when president of the Tennessee Company, is said to have contended that the commissary—an institution "not altogether eleemosynary," according to Mr. Burr, the company's counsel—was essential with a labor turnover of 1200 per cent per annum and a company office swamped with garnishment papers. However that may be, it did not prevent wage executions in a single Birmingham rolling mill from being 651 per thousand six years ago, nor interest rates from running from 200 to 540 per cent on small loans.

In that year it was estimated that loan sharks were taking a million dollars a year in interest out of Birmingham. In the summer of 1938 it was noted that the number of sharks was increasing. And here again, like magic in the Magic City, the absentee landlord appears; about seventy per cent of the sharks represent outside companies!

October, 1929, brought the crash, but well before that the \$ depression had struck Birmingham. "Hard times come here first and stay the longest." The shaky props of the South's economy could not hold up much; the decline was only the forerunner of what was presently to happen north of the Ohio. The fright deepened. The pig iron piled up and could not be sold; steel slowed down. One by one the local furnaces went out. Owen D. Young came and was reported to have told a party of businessmen at the Country Club either to dig down and feed the helpless population or else get ready for riots. Communist organizers entered the district, seeking a foothold in the principal Southern industrial city and among the sharecroppers farther south. Their efforts were fitful but the word "communism" alone was enough to send an electric shock through the district. So precarious was the stability of the region, so deep and long-standing its poverty, so firmly fixed the tradition of the deputy sheriff and the Ku-Klux, that the reaction was violent and ruthless. Organizers brought to Birmingham the bodies of two Negroes-dead at the hands of a mob which had attacked a sharecroppers' meeting; the public was invited to come and see them. There were other demonstrations. This was sufficient to stir local influence and authority to action; an ordinance was passed and drastic measures taken. Then the Scottsboro case added fuel to the flames, and the Communist label was added to the glossary of terrors. But this agitation was only incidental to a churning that was going on throughout the South, a sort of half-blind heaving. Then, all over the country, banks began to close.

8

The incoming Roosevelt Administration found Birmingham "the worst hit town in the country." Before that worst was over, more than a third of the city's population was said to be on relief and plenty more feared they would be. To thousands in Alabama the promise of the New Deal appeared heaven-sent. The T.V.A. was greeted with open arms, however great the wrath of the Alabama Power Company and its New York overlords. In local administration, the promises turned out to be something else again. Yet with all the shortcomings, the President was looked upon as a god. Section 7a promised the right to organize, and the United Mine Workers snatched the opportunity. Coal production had been declining over a period of years; one mine had attempted to work ten hours a day at ten cents an hour. The miners were about on their last legs. "Union organizers, white and black, went through the Birmingham district, holding up fistfuls of paper and silver dollars, asking the miners when they had last seen cash money." The Mine Workers had always admitted Negro delegates to the national conventions, but in Alabama in the past they had bowed to the inevitable and organized separate lodges. Now it was realized that if ever anything was to be accomplished an attempt must be made to bridge the color line. Hesitant, backing and filling, sidling to and fro, the two races approached each other.

Within two years some twenty-three thousand coal miners

had been organized and were under contract. However precariously, the miners' union was at last established in Alabama. In the ore mines and in the steel mills—the abode of the company union—progress was very slow. But the impossible had happened.

On a wet night they are coming to the lodge meeting. The union hall is the upper floor of an old abandoned store building on the edge of Birmingham. There's a sound of subdued singing upstairs; "devotions" are not yet over. Late arrivals, coming directly from the mine, edge their way in. The room is a big place, forty feet square or more, with jagged pieces of lath showing where the dingy, rain-soaked, whitewashed plaster has come loose. This was the meeting place of a fraternal order once, and a built-in bench, a battered sort of choir stall, runs round three sides of the room. In one corner is an egg stove with a sheet of galvanized iron behind it and a long stretch of stovepipe suspended from the ceiling by wires. A hot soft-coal fire is burning and the floor before the stove is strewn with matches. Electricity costs money and there isn't much light. At one side of a long table sit two black committee members counting check-off slips. Facing them is the lodge secretary, white with curly blond hair, in overalls with sleeves rolled up, bent over his ledger. These bookkeepers pay no attention to the devotions. All along two sides, on the choir-stall bench, sit the black brothers. On the third side sit the white brothers-a sizable minority-on the stall and a row of rickety chairs. The intoning of the hymn goes on with many black brothers swaying silently in their seats in time. Few of the white brothers sing. One of them, a big gray-haired man, sits in a battered stuffed chair near the stove, smoking a corncob, his head bent over and one hand covering his eyes. Another, a tall, cadaverous Southerner with Adam's apple and sparse red hair, gets up, goes over to the stove, opens the door, spits, and stands looking reflectively into the fire for a few minutes; then with a quick gesture of decision, he snaps the door shut and returns to his place.

And now Gus, the president of the lodge, a short man with snapping blue eyes and a leathery face, calls the meeting to order. The secretary rattles off the minutes at a machine-gun rate. Is there a motion that these minutes be accepted? A black brother instantly makes the motion and the man beside him seconds it. They are accepted. The district representative speaks-smoothly, not hesitantly as they do, but what he says means less. Gus rises again. Some new members are to receive the obligation to-night, and the president leaves the platform and goes down to the floor to make his remarks. Quietly, without a sound, the huge, black vicepresident moves into the chair and takes the gavel. He looks down impassively at the dimly lit room. He sits like a still giant with only an occasional soft tap of his gavel to call the place to order. Standing alone, in the middle of the floor, Gus begins to speak. "Brothers . . . ," he says. The twain have met.

Gradually the depression began to lift; the Steel Corporation was being overhauled, and rumors arrived in Birmingham that new building might be undertaken. While other forms of steel had suffered, the sheet mill had come through the worst and done well. In the summer of 1936, Birmingham newspapers quoted the remarks of Mr. John L. Perry—the sitting incumbent president of the Tennessee Company—before the Rotary Club: The Steel Corporation was about

to spend millions in plant improvement, "but they will spend this money in districts where labor relations are harmonious." What was needed was "aggressive and emphatic action on the part of newspapers to create and arouse zeal and enthusiasm to support industry against those irresponsible forces that are trying to impair and destroy industry, to create class feeling and to rouse a question in the minds of the public as to the ability and integrity of management." This was the Great Landlord, calling all to the colors, for the C.I.O. campaign was now under way in the district. Apparently labor relations were deemed to be harmonious, for in October the officials of the corporation, like a royal family on progress, arrived in Birmingham to announce that twenty-nine million dollars would be spent in expansion in the district.

The outburst that followed was deafening. The excitement caused by the announcement that the Federal government had spent or lent \$361,000,000 in Alabama in four years was feeble indeed compared to what followed the steel announcement. "Let's together make Birmingham the battleground on which to win the war for America's industrial supremacy of this world," was one comment. "It will eventually cause Birmingham to be the biggest industrial city and probably the biggest city south of the Ohio river," said an economist, stopping at the spring where John W. Gates and Abram Hewitt had drunk so long before.

The picture in Birmingham, in Alabama, and in the whole South was one of great confusion. In Alabama labor was moving into politics and appeared to have got some bargaining power. Some of the political fraternity had taken up the freight differential as an issue. A number of business-

men seemed to show signs that the old order was changing, even if it was not plain what the change was. A profound revolution was under way and the outcome was impossible to foresee. The call for outside capital was going up again, there was a reign of terror in Gadsden when the rubber workers tried to organize, the Bemis mill at Talladega had erected machine-gun placements, the Alabama Fuel and Iron Company was turned almost into a fortress, the cotton mill near Julia Russell's farm was fenced in, with a searchlight on the gatehouse, and was being patrolled by plug-uglies with guns. Before the LaFollette Committee in Washington an investigator for the State of Alabama had testified in the Gelders flogging case and, in answer to questions as to why the Birmingham grand jury had returned no indictments, replied: "You know, Senator, the T.C.I. owns about fifteensixteenths of the country around there . . . even by a court of misdemeanors and a \$10 fine-anything might bring about a civil suit which would antagonize the T.C.I."

In January, 1937, like a thunderclap, came the news that Mr. Taylor, the Steel chairman of the board, had offered terms to Lewis and the C.I.O. The Tennessee Company presently fell into line and then announced that support had been withdrawn from the company union. For a moment it seemed in Birmingham as though the walls of Jericho had fallen. The mills were booming, there had been two pay hikes, and at the very gates of the Ensley and Fairfield mills union handbills and newspapers could be handed out. Two months later the president of the Tennessee Company made an astounding statement: "The retarding influence in the economic development of the Southland, particularly Alabama, is the poor distribution of wealth which can certainly

be remedied by the ever-increasing progressive intelligence of our leaders." Almost while the statement was being made, Mr. Tom Girdler, the chairman of Republic Steel, which had just absorbed Gulf States Steel, arrived in Birmingham to inspect his domain. As a director of the Goodyear Company, he had just finished looking over the tire plant at Gadsden. A dinner was tendered him and the other Republic officials at the Country Club with the president of Sloss-Sheffield as toastmaster. Mr. Girdler was reported to have spoken with great vigor about the prospects and about labor. "We don't like shotgun weddings. We feel pretty seriously about this subject of being forced into something you don't want to do and particularly when about ninety-five per cent of the people who are associated with you in the steel business don't want to do it either. We are not going to do it, not in a hurry, which means, I think, that we won't do it at all." Then Mr. Girdler was said to have expressed admiration for all the T.C.I. had done for Birmingham and the South. Meantime an absentee-controlled operation was in progress: the Southern Railway had placed an order for cars with the Pullman Company at Bessemer to be made from steel furnished by the T.C.I. And Tallulah Bankhead was on her way to Birmingham, after her long absence from home, to appear in "Reflected Glory."

And what about the future of this magic city? "Southern hospitality," says a distinguished Southern economist, "has never extended to ideas." The maintenance of the civil liberties, freedom for the expression of thought, has never been an easy task in the United States; but in the South it has been most difficult of all. There is just now a great deal of

trumpeting about the "new" Southern market; it has been heard before. The long slow move of industry southward, representing migrant cotton spinners for the most part, has recently been somewhat accelerated by rayon and other manufacturers, attracted by the celebrated cheap and docile and unorganized labor. This labor becomes ever more plentiful as cotton culture breaks down. The promise of the great mineral deposits is genuine, but when that promise will be realized no man can predict.

In Birmingham itself the influence of the absentee landlord still is strong. The very existence of the city rests upon the iron and steel industry. In 1936 the United States Steel Corporation, in the guise of the Tennessee Company, owned 600 million tons of unmined iron ore and an estimated billion tons of coal, almost half the coal and iron resources of the district. The Republic Steel Corporation is next. These are the only two companies which make steel. Most of the remaining iron deposits are divided between the Sloss-Sheffield Steel and Iron Company and the Woodward Iron Company. Of them all, the Tennessee Company is by far the biggest and is the largest employer of labor. (In January, 1939 it was rumored that "clacker"-imitation money drawn against pay-was at last to be abandoned by the T. C. I.) Yet, despite its gigantic resources, it had in 1936 only 6.6 per cent of the corporation's steel-making capacity! Its chief executive changes from time to time as New York dictates. Mr. Taylor has retired from the Steel Corporation and the young Mr. Stettinius is the present chief executive. The precarious nature of the city's economic life has been described, and if the last depression shook Birmingham to its foundations one wonders what the next will do.

The future of American society is a very uncertain thing, and the South is ill prepared to face those uncertainties. The Southern people, black and white, are poor and every influence has been to keep them so. The concomitants of this poverty have been illiteracy and bigotry, inheritances from the slave system, consolidated by the Civil War. Against terrific handicaps some of this has been overcome, but much remains. The evil done by years of Jim Crow poison is incalculable; the social cost of "keeping the nigger in his place" is beyond computation. For sixty years the Bourbons and the absentee landlords ruled the South and they all but wrung it dry. That numbers of Southern people, despite the odds against them, have yet refused to lose heart is evidence of a magnificent courage. Steadily the demand for change increases; the unrest does not cease. A resolute labor movement is at last under way, some genuine co-operation between blacks and whites has begun. These are positive signs of social health and if they succeed they may-perhapsturn the region toward a brighter future.

And if that does come about, if Birmingham, the city of perpetual promise, at last comes into its own, then so much the more must we remember the brave men and women, living and dead, who sometimes alone, sometimes by twos and threes, refused to give way before ignorance, fear, and rapacity; who with all the shortcomings to which human flesh is heir, yet wrought with tireless hands through crowded days and sometimes gave their lives that "equal justice to all men of whatever state or persuasion" might actually come to pass in a region where democracy never had a chance.

## IV

## OMAHA, NEBRASKA

## THE GLORY HAS DEPARTED

"Where the Almighty placed the signal station at the entrance of a garden seven hundred miles in length . . ."

—George Francis Train. 1863

"We are a small city in the agricultural district."

—Counsel for the Omaha & Council Bluffs Street Railway, 1934

On the EDGE of the Great Plains, on the west bank of the Missouri River, is a city where, on December 2, 1863, a group of men began one of the first great undertakings of the industrial era in America. The men represented a corporation capitalized at one hundred million dollars, larger than any ever known in the United States. A civil war, which was to set free the slave, was raging; it had already set free the ironmaster, the merchant, and the banker. The political supremacy of agriculture had been broken at last and the industrialists were on their way to power. The place where this ceremony occurred was Omaha; the occasion was the groundbreaking for the Union Pacific Railway.

It was the peculiar fortune of this town to serve as the headquarters for the lieutenants of a distant industry; at the same time the town was dependent upon agriculture which industry had vanquished. The strength of industry in that day was in the railroads, and Omaha shared in the strength for a generation. In the succeeding generation, during the few years of farmer wealth, Omaha shared in that wealth also. The day of the railroad power passed, the years of farm prosperity faded. The city had served its purpose in the evolution of an economy traditional to the American mind. What its future would be in a different pattern no one could foresee.

If there are misgivings about the future they are not apparent tonight as the annual coronation ball of King Ak-Sar-Ben gets under way. Ak-Sar-Ben—Nebraska spelled backward—is an association of businessmen and public-spirited citizens who labor to increase business and promote "good will and a spirit of friendliness between the people of Omaha and residents of the surrounding territory."

Out in the Coliseum, on the outskirts of town, the decorators have contrived an Italian garden scene, in the center of which is the throne, "inspired by a classic niche" with "throne drapes of yellow satin." Upon this throne will presently sit some businessman of the town whose name has been concealed. While an orchestra plays, the guests assemble in the evergreen-edged boxes. Over there is the governor of Nebraska and his lady, come up to Omaha for the ceremony. Not far away is the governor of Iowa with his wife also. The Cathedral Choir of Lincoln, transported thither through the courtesy of the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad, sings sweetly.

Now the ceremonies are about to begin. Announced by loud trumpet blasts, there appear through a doorway surmounted by "a huge urn festooned by golden drapes," vari-

ous characters in the pageant and officials of the organization, got up in costumes foreign to men who spend their business hours near Farnam and Sixteenth Streets and lunch at the Henshaw Cafeteria and the Fontenelle Hotel Grill. Most of them are well-known citizens. Among them is Mr. Ben Danbaum, head of Danbaum Inc., formerly the Midwest Adjustment Agency, one of the best known detective agencies west of the Mississippi. Mr. Danbaum's armed guards rendered great aid in the Omaha streetcar strike. During the strike one of the members of the City Council was moved to say that Mr. Danbaum ran the city's police department.

The Board of Governors are called for and they appear, even more influential as citizens than the first comers. Before a simulated travertine wall, in front of a row of cypress trees against a blue sky, these dignitaries group themselves. Among them is Mr. George Brandeis, the leading merchant of the town, a director of the Omaha National Bank, the Union Stockyards, and the street railway. Near him are Mr. Joseph Barker, the insurance agent, and Mr. Schellberg, the president of the Stockyards Company, and Mr. De Emmett Bradshaw, president of the Woodmen of the World Life Insurance Association, which has its headquarters in Omaha. Mr. Bradshaw's "financial genius and his great fraternal heart have made the Woodmen of the World the nation's strongest fraternal life insurance association." Mr. Barker, Mr. Schellberg, and Mr. Bradshaw are all directors of the Nebraska Power Company. The gentleman with the bald head and glasses is Mr. James E. Davidson, the president of the Power Company. He is a director in various corporations and formerly was chairman of the Board of Regents of the Municipal University of Omaha. He has for years been active in the affairs of the town and might be called the leading citizen of Omaha. He, like Mr. Brandeis, was once a king of Ak-Sar-Ben himself, an honor "based on unselfish service to the community." As president of the Power Company he is also the resident of an absentee landlord, the Electric Bond and Share Company which controls American Power and Light Company which controls Nebraska Power.

With the full business strength of Omaha present, the name of the new king, a drygoods merchant, is announced at last. His majesty, dressed in satin knee breeches and wearing a fine robe, is invested with his regalia; "princesses" and "countesses," girls from the town and places near by, are introduced and finally with shouts and cheers, the queen, a banker's daughter, is presented. The ceremonies are over, the orchestra begins a waltz, and in a moment governors and counselors and all that beauty, all that wealth of Omaha e'er gave are dancing to "Can I Forget You."

The night wears on, the lights in the city go out; downtown the Brandeis department store with its Belgian opera house façade looms up like a mausoleum. Even more mausoleumlike is the great pale-pink marble Joslyn Memorial, built with money made from a patent venereal disease remedy and boiled-plate insides for small-town newspapers. Away over in the south part of town a single light is burning up in the Stockyards Building. The rest of the place is dark and still. The office of the brand inspector of Wyoming is shut, the staff of the Daily Journal-Stockman are gone, but below, here and there, are yellow spots of light, the dusty, dimly burning bulbs that mark the broad unpainted board ramps

that run back and forth across the yards and above the livestock pens. The odor of a great barnyard, mixed up with fertilizer smells, covers everything. The place is almost empty tonight. There's a handful of cattle in the John Clay pens; eighteen red-and-white heifers are pressed up against the gate of the Billy Woods Commission Company pen. One of them can be heard gulping noisily at the concrete trough. The sheep pen with its corrugated-iron roof is still. Toward the south are big sprawling dark shapes—the packing plants. Nearest is Cudahy, then Armour, and Swift.

From the railroad yards near the concrete and iron viaduct comes the puff of a switch engine. It stops. A man leans out of the window in the signal tower and knocks his pipe on the sill. Off, down the tracks, a brakeman's lantern can be seen swinging; there follows a clank and smash as the couplers of two cattle cars come together. There are not many cars in the yards. Years ago when great trainloads were coming in from Ogallala and down from Wyoming and Montana the yard was pandemonium. No longer. More than half the livestock comes by truck now. Tonight only one train inspector is in sight, his winking flashlight bobbing up and down over the journal boxes as he hurries down the track. The tall withered grass on the yard embankment slope rustles in the wind; two or three crickets left from summer are chirping. In the Swift offices a late-working bookkeeper turns out his light and gets ready to go home. He does not hear the orchestra in the Coliseum; it is playing "Just An Old Cow Hand."

The Ak-Sar-ben ball is on a Friday; Packingtown is not invited. Saturday night is the social night in South Omaha. The cars come in by scores from Iowa farms across the

Missouri River and from Nebraska towns roundabout. The saloons fill up early and on this particular evening, early as it is, unconscious drunks are slumped over in the alleys and darkened doorways. A pimpled lady is coming out of Mike's Buffet at Twenty-fourth and N, a white stone pitcher in her hand. Mike has a colored jazz band-piano, sax, and traps-perched on a tiny brass-railed platform at the back of the barroom. The sax, who wears octagonal rimless glasses, is getting hot and the customers in the varnished yellow pine booths are getting hot too. A huge Polish girl with stringy bobbed black hair and a boiled pink face is simultaneously swabbing a booth table with a damp rag, weeping into her beer, and talking to a befuddled trucker. "He put me out on the street without a dime," she says, while the sax pumps the heat into "The Merry-Go-Round Broke Down." Near the door is a table set with rickety twisted-wire soda-fountain chairs. A toothless white-haired old man sits there, reading a dirty, rumpled Journal-Stockman and listening to the weeping girl at the same time.

Outside, up and down, and all along Twenty-fourth Street, the cars backed against the curb. A young Cass County farmer with a big gold tooth is standing beside a rusty Chevrolet, his arms full of packages, waiting for his wife to quit nursing the baby and open the door. Two soldiers from Fort Crook, their khaki bleached white from much washing, argue in a doorway with a girl in a black rayon dress. A discussion is going on inside Alex's Bargain Center; there's a close-out of men's suits at \$8.75 and a customer appears to be annoyed about something. At the corner a group of men are gathered about a wizened Negro; they are arguing about the packing-house union just now

organizing. A man in corduroys and a chewed-up Stetson glances at them sharply as he climbs into his car. The car has a little plate marked *Fremont*, just above the license. He is bound home, north along Twenty-fourth Street, up through the main part of Omaha, and so west, where the road stretches out straightaway. On either side the fields, covered with corn stubble, stretch on and on, endless billows of a stubble ocean. The straggling lights of Omaha are left behind and only the good surface provided by the highway department and the poles of the Nebraska Power Company are there to remind him that there is no place where the Federal government and Wall Street do not penetrate.

2

On the afternoon of August 13, 1859, two months before John Brown made his rail at Harpers Ferry, an Illinois politician and railroad lawyer stood on the Iowa bluff above the Missouri River and looked across to a little village on the opposite bank. Some town lots in Council Bluffs had been offered him as security for a loan of three thousand dollars; he had come to inspect the lots himself. Presently he left the bluff and went back to the tavern where he fell into conversation with an engineer who explained why Council Bluffs was the point where the much discussed transcontinental railway ought to begin. The lawyer listened and, the next day, departed. He made the loan. Less than a year later, supported by railroad promoters, abolitionists, manufacturers, and Free-Soilers, he was elected President of the United States.

The lawyer was Abraham Lincoln. The little village that

he saw from the bluff was Omaha, the jumping-off place of the plains, that Omaha which for more than a generation after meant to various persons the gateway to the West—the West, that mystic country where a man could try again, have another chance, become an empire builder, grow up with the country, speculate in land, lend money gathered up in Massachusetts and New Hampshire, get a start in the world, escape the tyrannies of Europe, breathe once more, be a free man, get a homestead for nothing, worship as he chose, and, incidentally, help to pay the interest on the foreign capital invested in American enterprises.

For many years there had been agitation over the question of a railway across the plains. Though the great sea of grass that stretched from the Missouri to the Rockies was still the hunting ground of the Indians, alert Southerners knew that a railroad across it would mean more United States senators to support low tariffs and slavery or oppose them. Calhoun knew it; his disciple, Jefferson Davis, knew it. In 1853 Davis, as Secretary of War, was in charge of the little engineer corps that went west to survey the nine possible routes. What he wanted was a railway from the Mississippi to the Pacific, running straight across Louisiana and Texas. He did not get it. There were numerous Northern individuals who wanted the road in free territory. When the Kansas-Nebraska Act threw open the two new territories in 1854-after up-and-coming men from Council Bluffs had staked out town lots in Omaha before they had a "right" to-the railroad became hopelessly entangled with all the other interests, beliefs, prejudices, and agitations that were driving North and South apart.

Already, in the fifties, railroads had reached the Mississippi

from Chicago and were being pushed across Iowa. Among the promoters was Thomas Durant, a prairie physician turned Wall Street promoter, a gentleman fond of the ladies and a dispenser of shawls, diamonds, and yachts. He was interested not only in the Rock Island Railroad but also in another called the Mississippi & Missouri, partly built across Iowa, which Durant thought might be carried through to the Pacific. To further this plan he sent ahead his young engineer, Grenville Dodge, to make surveys and gather information.

The panic of '57 stopped railroad construction and stranded Dodge in Council Bluffs as a general storekeeper and small-time banker. There he dabbled in politics, sent letters to Durant's Wall Street office, and watched the wagon trains setting out for the West. The Omaha townsite speculators had rigged up a ferry to raft emigrants across the river. They didn't have much of a town, but they burned with enthusiasm. The settlement already had one case of delirium tremens and, along with Council Bluffs, talked about the railroad. Dodge had his facts in hand when the Illinois lawyer arrived to look over the town lots.

On the 4th of March, 1861, Lincoln took the oath. The issue was joined; it was up to the Illinois lawyer now. The war in which the Federal government was to make an immediate investment of more than three billion dollars was imminent, and hordes of men determined to be the immediate beneficiaries of this investment jammed the committee rooms and the steaming lobbies of the Willard Hotel. Every train from Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, and Chicago brought the speculators and the lobbyists,

swinging their carpetbags and looking for contracts. The Southerners were gone; a Pacific railroad was a certainty.

Iron men from Pennsylvania, wool and cotton men from Massachusetts and New Hampshire and Rhode Island, bankers from Philadelphia, nail manufacturers, boot and shoe men, all licking their chops with anticipation of tariffs and subsidies. And railroad men! The railroad committees of the expiring Congress had been swamped with business. A bill for a pony express and overland mail, routed via Omaha, had passed both houses the last night of the session. The whole industrial crowd, no matter how they might fight among themselves, had at last got control of government—it was their government—and they intended to make the mare go.

The Pacific Railroad situation was this: A group of California promoters, infected with the railroad fever of Theodore Judah, headed by Leland Stanford, Charles Crocker, Mark Hopkins, and Collis P. Huntington, had a railway started and wanted to build east. This road eventually became the Central Pacific. Various Eastern groups wanted to build west. Durant was the chief of one of these groups; Grenville Dodge of Council Bluffs, famous later not only as a great engineer but as the most accomplished railroad lobbyist in America, was a minor figure in the Durant group. Every one of the railroad promoters knew that if a road was to be built the government would have to put up the money. The great question was: Who was going to get it? Indeed, the diamond-sporting Durant believed the business prospects of such a railroad were mythical and that the real profit could come only from government-subsidized construction. But before any division of spoil could be

made, legislation was necessary. With a will the lobbyists went to work upon a Congress that for a dozen different reasons was committed to the proposition from the start.

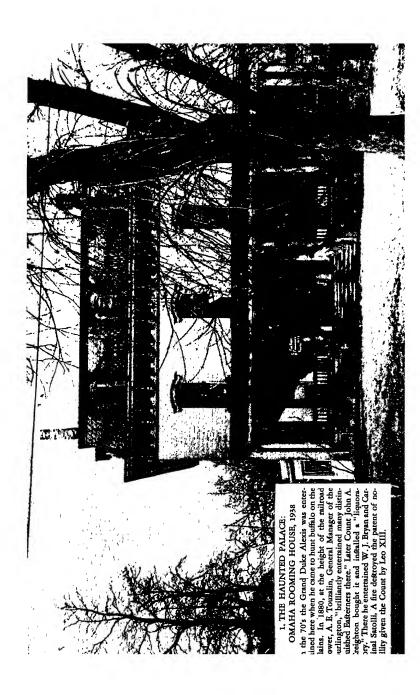
On July 1, 1862, the Pacific Railroad Act, providing for a hundred-million-dollar corporation, the largest capitalization ever known in the United States—was passed. The bill "to aid in the construction of a railroad and telegraph line from the Missouri River to the Pacific Ocean and to secure to the Government the use of the same for Postal, Military and other purposes" presented the promoters with

- 1. A right of way through the public lands, 200 feet on each side, for the entire distance.
  - 2. The free use of building materials from the public lands.
  - 3. The annulment of Indian titles.
- 4. Every alternate, odd numbered section of public land, to the amount of five sections a mile on each side.
- 5. A subsidy of \$16,000 a mile on the plains, and from \$32,000 to \$48,000 a mile through the mountains.

Upon the completion of each forty miles, the subsidy, in the form of United States bonds, would be paid over to the railroad company. The bonds and interest were to be redeemed at the end of 30 years and were to constitute a first mortgage.

Anybody in the country could have the subsidy. All you had to do was to build a railroad out to a point on the rooth meridian in the middle of the Nebraska plains. Whoever got there first received the subsidy on all that he had already built and the privilege of building the rest of the way. This left an open field for the various Eastern groups. The iron men had seen to it that the use of iron manufactured in America was obligatory.

Now the promoters and the bankers began to mull over the prospects. In the autumn of '62 Durant organized the





2. THE TRANS-MISSISSIPPI EXPOSITION, 1898
"Fittingly enough, a conspicuous place was given to a huge plaster
warrior in a chariot drawn by four lions and inscribed simply: OMAHA."

Union Pacific Railroad Company and the subscription books were opened. The money didn't come in, despite all the fervor and publicity. The truth was that the subsidy wouldn't satisfy. Promoters wanted more. Finally, in the summer of '63, Lincoln sent for Dodge, who by this time was a general in the Union Army. They talked again as they had on that summer day in 1859 on the tavern porch at Council Bluffs. Dodge told him that it would take even better terms to make the promoters act; he advised him in the matter of fixing the eastern terminus of the road-at Council Bluffs, directly across from Omaha! Dodge had been constantly in correspondence with Durant and knew that Durant was determined to commence construction at Omaha. Would Congress loosen up? One could but try. The lobbyists were turned loose in Washington with a half-milliondollar expense account and Durant decided to waste time no further.

On the 3d of December, 1863, Durant's chief of publicity, the eccentric George Francis Train, arrived in Omaha to break ground for the great effort that was to unite East and West, all minds and hearts, into one indissoluble union. The feelings of the people in the village may be imagined. For so long all their speculative hopes, the very existence of their town, had depended on the moves in a Wall Street poker game and the activities of lobbyists upon the Federal government. But now! "The great Pacific Railroad is commenced," Train told the assembled crowd at Omaha, "and if you knew the man who has hold of the affair as well as I do, no doubt would ever arise as to its speedy completion. The President shows good judgment in locating the road where the Almighty placed the signal

station at the entrance of a garden seven hundred miles in length . . . (loud and prolonged cheers) . . . Congress gives something towards building this great national thoroughfare—not much, but something; say a loan of government credit for thirty years, for \$16,000 a mile and 20 million acres of land. But what is that in these times?"

What, indeed, with a great war raging, with contracts being shoveled out in Washington and profits pouring down like Niagara? Would Congress think again? They would. Oakes and Oliver Ames, the millionaire shovelmakers of Massachusetts, had now entered the corporation. Oakes Ames was a congressman and in a position to act in concert with the lobbyists and members of the government who were interested. By July 2, 1864, the efforts of the promoters had turned the trick. The railroad act was completely revamped; the land grant was doubled; coal and iron lands previously withheld were now included in the grant; the government loan was reduced to the status of a second mortgage and the subsidy would be paid at the end of every twenty miles. The way was clear now and only one thing more was essential: some means must be found for the promoters to keep their hands on the subsidy. They found it; it was the Credit Mobilier.

In 1859 a corporation charter had been put through the Pennsylvania legislature. It appears to have been the distant ancestor of the holding company. At all events, it permitted the holder to do almost anything he wanted. This charter the Union Pacific promoters bought and christened the Credit Mobilier of America. Contracts for construction were let by the railroad company to dummies and in turn to the Credit Mobilier. These contracts were paid for out of

the government subsidy. It was the aim of the promoters to draw off the cash into their own pockets and at the same time retain control of the railroad company. They succeeded. But they were so absorbed in jockeying back and forth in preliminary deals that construction came to a dead halt. The war ended, Lincoln was dead, yet still there was delay.

The townsite speculators of Omaha may well have chewed their fingernails in desperation. Durant came out from New York "dressed in the style of a frontier dandy. He wore a slouch hat, velvet sack coat and vest, corduroy breeches and top boots, all his clothing being of a costly character." He appeared full of enthusiasm, but still there was no construction. It was plain that promoters and dummies alone would not do; already another road building out of Kansas City was on its way to the rooth meridian, which meant the capture of the subsidy. Now and at last the promoters gave to Grenville Dodge the command as chief engineer. In May, 1866, he arrived in Omaha to find that all there was to the U.P. was a "rusty and uncertain line that jutted out from the banks of the Missouri River on to the prairies of Nebraska as far as the Elkhorn." He took one look and got down to business.

3

Omaha in 1866 was still a village, but growing. No longer did the postmaster carry letters in his hat. From the ferry landing on the riverbank the ground rose abruptly and up the slope, running west, streets were laid out and named after railroad promoters: Farnam and Dodge and Douglas. It was the territorial capital, a huddle of frame buildings run up overnight, a few brick structures and a generous number of saloons. The town faced the river and the east—the distant east where the moneymen were; at its back door was the prairie. The town had no rail connection with anything. It was just there—on the riverbank.

By degrees the efforts of General Dodge gathered speed. Huge quantities of stores were teamed across from Des Moines or brought up the Missouri from St. Joe. Up and down the river, the bottom lands were scoured by gangs, cutting cottonwood to supplement the ties, laid down in Omaha at the prodigious cost of two dollars and fifty cents apiece. In July, two months after Dodge arrived to take charge, the chief tracklayer, ex-General Jack Casement, assembled a thousand men and a hundred teams out on the prairie, forty miles northwest of town, at the end of the rusty track. A wilder crowd of roughnecks was never seen, a mixture of "Union and Confederate veterans, Irish immigrants, Mexicans, bushwhackers, muleskinners, and ex-convicts from eastern jails."

Within three months these men were laying three miles of track a day, shoving up the Platte Valley, on their way to the rooth meridian. In Omaha, the great jumping-off place, the trade that battened on construction flourished. Locomotives, in pieces, were brought upriver or hauled across Iowa and set up in the new brick shops on the riverbank. Presently the broad-stacked engines were steaming and coughing out over the prairie. Westward the course of the hundred-million-dollar corporation made its way; the Commercial and Financial Chronicle purred with contentment.

Late in the fall of '66 Durant brought out a crowd of guests and made up a special train to ride to the end of the line. Fortified with hampers of champagne and provisions, six cooks, a photographer, a barber, a band, and a printing press, the little open-vestibule wooden cars rattled along the Platte Valley, bearing "150 capitalists and prominent citizens" including George Pullman and the Marquis de Chambrun. They made enthusiastic reports. In Washington the lobbyists and interested members of Congress watched over the interests of this road and Collis Huntington's Central Pacific, now worming its way—with Chinese coolie labor—through the Sierras.

Day by day the lucky and diligent ones in Omaha prospered. Already a little group of men, whose families were to dominate the community for years, had become influential. The dark-haired Edward Creighton, child of an Irish immigrant, was there. He had built the overland telegraph in '61 and when the Pacific Telegraph Company was organized he had bought a tenth of the million-dollar capital stock for eighteen cents on the dollar. One of his wagon trains to Montana had made a profit of sixty thousand dollars on a single trip. He was the president of a bank and presently of a railroad. His younger brother John, who was to end his days as a papal count, was there. William Paxton, whose name seems to have got into more businesses and on to more buildings than any other in Omaha, was freighting. The interest of these men and many others was now fixed upon the Union Pacific. Look at the Millards, Ezra and Joe, who had come in '56. They lent money. When Oliver Ames came out on Union Pacific business he met Joe in the stagecoach on the way from Des Moines and bought five thousand dollars' worth of stock in the Millard bank. The Millards drew an even bigger plum than this: they became the chief dispensing agent in Omaha of the great hundred-million-dollar bonanza.

But they were not the only ones. One might get contracts to supply the military or provide the government with beef. There were Union Pacific contracts of all sorts which. via the Credit Mobilier, showered down either money or promises to pay. Occasionally the little Omaha moneylenders and contractors may have looked anxiously at the incidental obligations which the great Eastern promoters were piling up, but not often. With the completion of every twenty miles, the Federal treasury doled out the bonds, almost as good as gold, and more lifeblood flowed into the Credit Mobilier and thence into Omaha. The Union Pacific was far from being the only gold mine in that age of plunder, but it was one of the most spectacular. It was the business of Federal Commissioner Cornelius Wendell to inspect each completed section of road before the subsidy could be paid. On one occasion he demanded twenty-five thousand dollars before he would give his approval. The Credit Mobilier promoters paid and called it blackmail! Blackmail at a time when everybody-almost-was getting his. Without the Union Pacific the speculators of Omaha were nothing; with it the world was their oyster.

Big and little, the Omaha men were drawn ever more closely to the railway. They did teaming for it, laid brick for it, published newspapers with its money, ran restaurants and sold clothing to it, equipped faro banks to provide excitement for Union Pacific men and opened whorehouses to satisfy Union Pacific appetites. What touched the Union

Pacific touched them—to the quick. They were citizens of the great democracy, truly; they were citizens of Nebraska and citizens of Omaha also, but far and away beyond all this, the fortunate promoters were citizens of the Union Pacific Railway, the fount of every blessing. Indeed, when one of its lobbyists was asked. "How much of its—Nebraska's—greatness do you attribute to the Union Pacific?" he replied "I might say all of it." The impact of this great corporation upon the town and region was so terrific that it set the pattern for almost all economic and social thought.

So it was not remarkable when, in 1867, Nebraska was admitted as a State, that two men regarded as citizens of the Union Pacific should be elected to represent the Union Pacific State of Nebraska in the United States Senate. In the Herndon House at Farnam and Ninth Streets there had lived together the United States marshal, the territorial governor, the territorial secretary, the adjutant general, and the chaplain of the 1st Nebraska regiment. One after another they went off to the United States Senate, popularly esteemed as Union Pacific senators. And the Union Pacific leased their common dwelling, the Herndon House, which belonged to a brother-in-law of one of the four, and turned it into the railway headquarters.

Through all the Wall Street thimblerigging and Washington lobbying the road building had gone steadily on under Dodge's supervision and at last the end of the great undertaking was in sight. The Central Pacific coolies and the Union Pacific Irish worked desperately, day and night—the Central Pacific crew on the 28th of April, 1869, laid six miles of track in six and a quarter hours—to snatch for their bosses as much as possible of the subsidy.

On the 1st of May, 1869, they met at Promontory Point, Utah, and on the 10th "in a flat valley, bare except for the sage brush and a sprinkling of scrub cedars . . . with the uninvited world, save the circling buzzards, shut out," the final ceremonies occurred. It was a close shave for Durant. He and the Union Pacific party had got as far as Green River, Wyoming, when the promoter's train was held up by his own contractors, who wanted their money. Neither they nor their men had been paid for months. For a moment it looked as though the much-advertised "marriage" of the two roads was going to blow up in a general strike. Desperate, Dodge wired Ames for the money; it came and was paid over and the ransomed Durant proceeded on his way.

The solemn moment came. With the two engines facing each other and a wild crowd of teamsters, tracklayers, and laborers surrounding the notables, a tie of California laurel bound with silver was laid down and a golden spike and silver hammer brought to the track. Promoters of the two roads eyed each other, already getting set for the rate wars that were to follow. Then Preacher Todd of Pittsfield, Massachusetts, who was to call down the blessings of Almighty God, arose. Every stroke of the silver hammer was to be reported to the country by wire. In Omaha a breathless crowd had assembled. "Hats off," came the message, "prayer is being offered." Every wire from the East was cleared, via Omaha, for Promontory Point. Something snarled in the Omaha office and for a moment there was intense confusion. Then: "We have got done praying; the spike is about to be presented." Then the hammer strokes and finally came the single word: "Done!" The transcontinental railway was completed. Within an hour, over the champagne, Stanford

was cursing the Federal government for not being more generous with its subsidy. In less than six years he and his partners made a profit of more than five hundred per cent on an investment of a million dollars! This incredible work, this gigantic project that had thrilled the world and represented the effort of thousands, was still the possession of promoters. The labor of an army of unknown men, in heat and cold and hunger and violent death, had beaten the wilderness, the desert, and the mountains. And the work of the coolies—the Central Pacific—was soon to become a part of "the octopus" and the work of the Irish—the Union Pacific—was for a generation to be a byword for plunder, rascality, and ruin.

4

In the autmun of 1872, on the eve of the great panic that was about to sweep the country, the New York Sun got at the story of a lawsuit brought in Pennsylvania against Ames and the Credit Mobilier. Grant's campaign for a second term was in full swing; there was no premonition of political disaster. On the 4th of September, under the caption: "The King of Frauds," the Sun turned loose the scandal of the Credit Mobilier. The nub of it was this: In December, 1867, and January, 1868, Congressman Oakes Ames-simultaneously a representative from Massachusetts, chief promoter of both Union Pacific and Credit Mobilier, and most influential member of the Committee on Pacific Railroad before whom questions of land grant and subsidy must come-had sold Credit Mobilier stock to a number of the most influential members of the House and Senate, politicians who controlled the course of legislation on the floor and in committee. The stock was sold at par; shortly thereafter dividends were paid. These dividends were so large that they covered the cost of the stock and more. Upon the publication of these facts investigation committees were appointed and panic-stricken legislators ran for cover.

Finally, the books of the Credit Mobilier were produced and profits of the great adventure were revealed. This was the final estimate of the construction company's bookkeepers:

Profit to the Credit Mobilier	
Amount paid by the Union Pacific to the Credit Mobilier	

These figures were quarreled with but it was certain that a profit well in excess of twenty millions in cash had gone to the Credit Mobilier group. The Hundred Million Dollar Corporation had panned out gloriously.

Then the country was treated to the ironical spectacle of legislators, deep in anxious labors for metal and textile tariffs, sitting in judgment upon hapless members whose cut was so tiny compared with that of the Credit Mobilier crowd that comparison was ludicrous. The legislators of the Gilded Age were poor bargainers; they got little for the huge bounties that were given away. Congressman J. A. Bingham of Ohio, the chief architect of the due process clause, who had a seat next to Ames in the front row of the House was allotted twenty shares. But the comparison was even more strange in the case of Ames who must play two parts: that of the great industrialist who would have Congress do his bidding and that of a congressman who gladly carried out the desires of his other self. Ames, before the Committee, testified

freely and with great frankness. The Wilson Committee held that the job was "tantamount to bribery." Ames could not understand it. Wasn't this the way things were done? He produced his little memorandum book with all the details. Why all this fervor, this outburst? Ten days later he was dead.

What was the reason for these transactions "tantamount to bribery"? Why should this stock distribution have occurred in December, '67, and January, '68? It was testified that there was no intention of buying favorable legislation; rather, it was to ward off unfavorable legislation. One fact deserves particular attention. The fact was this: By the 16th of August, 1867, the Union Pacific tracks were laid within thirty-seven miles of the western boundary of Nebraska and trains were running. Nebraska citizens were paying ten cents a mile passenger fares and freight rates were so high that it was cheaper to haul goods by wagon from Omaha to Fremont, forty miles away, than ship by rail! The devil of all devils, rates, had appeared and complaints from the Prairie States (they crowd the dockets of the Interstate Commerce Commission to this day) had begun. The complaints reached a Wisconsin congressman who promptly in December, 1867, introduced a resolution calling for the Federal regulation of rates on the Union Pacific. General Dodge, who served simultaneously as chief engineer and as U.P. lobbyist congressman from Iowa, at once referred the resolution to committee. In January Ames was writing: "I want that 14,000 increase of the C M to sell here. We want more friends in this Congress. . . . " Now another resolution was introduced in the House which provided that a commission consisting of the Secretary of War, the Secretary of the Interior, and the

Attorney General should on the 1st of July each year fix rates over the Union Pacific, the Central Pacific, and their branches. One may imagine the icy chills that went down the spine of the Massachusetts shovelmaker; one may imagine the icy chills of other corporation representatives. Could one conceive a more ghastly precedent to happen in a Gilded Age? At all events, Ames moved with quiet expedition. The second rate-fixing resolution reached the Senate Committee on Pacific Railroad and was heard of no more. The ghost was laid. The dreadful threat was averted. The profit to Vice-President Colfax seems to have been about \$700. That of the future President Garfield was \$329. And the star of empire continued on its way.

5

If Omaha was in love with the Union Pacific, a sort of kept woman enjoying the uncertain favors of the hundred-million-dollar sweetheart, where did the rate cries come from? They came from the farmers and merchants in the little towns that mushroomed on the prairie. A division of feeling between Omaha and the State was evident almost at once. In the Sodom on the river—it had a population of 16,000 in 1870 with some plank sidewalks, a frame opera house, and still more saloons—dwelt the promoters or agents of the distant ones. There, darting in and out of Millard's or Kountze's bank or over in the U.P. offices or on Farnham Street corners were "the leeches who suck the farmers' blood"—ah, and lived in riot surrounded by mirrored bars, chuck-a-luck games, lush women in sealskin jackets, and all

other manner of mouth-watering iniquity. On the plains it was another story.

The first comers to Nebraska-after the straggling Indian traders, squatters, and claim jumpers of the wilderness dayswere those who had voted themselves a farm in '61 and who, under the Homestead Act, could file a claim on one hundred and sixty acres and by living on it five years prove up on the claim and have title. West of Omaha was the Platte River, south was the Blue River valley, a fertile stretch of rolling country, well watered and with clumps of willow along the edges of the stream. On the Kansas border was the meandering Republican River, fringed with cottonwoods, which drained other desirable land. North of Omaha, toward Dakota and for a considerable distance west, all was arable. This was loess soil with unbroken sod, the grazing ground of the buffalo. Beyond, the land rose steadily toward the cattle country, the sand hills and buttes on the edge of Wyoming.

Into the fertile sections the homesteaders came, but they didn't come fast enough. The railroads, built as speculations and largely without plan, now had to have traffic and to get it they settled Nebraska at high pressure. They had their huge land grants to do it with. "Land on easy terms. Household goods brought out free." Europe was flooded with gaudy lithographs and luscious pamphlets advertising a new Eden to people who had never owned an acre and who regarded land as holy. Agents were in Liverpool and in the Baltic cities; they scoured the Continent from Bavaria to Russia, they corresponded with French communists. Gaars, Swansons, Obchods, Dvornicheks, Gratzes, Krashetskis, and Branns were hurried to a strange and distant world where

there were two towns: New York and Lincoln. Trainloads of these strangers, some with money and some without, some stolid, some weeping, rolled through Omaha on their way to fill up the endless emptiness of the plains. Each one of these migrants must play several parts, serve several functions, but one part, one function, could not be dodged. Out of them must come the labor that would produce the grain and meat that the roads would carry to make a profit and pay interest charges in London and on the Continent.

For industry—in the persons of the great promoters, trust-makers, and industrialists, the Carnegies, Rockefellers, and Goulds—was gradually consolidating its power. In the inland regions were the imitators and the deputies: Gowen in the Pennsylvania anthracite, Milton Smith in Kentucky, Enoch Ensley in Birmingham, Alabama. In Nebraska, less than a decade had passed, with Omaha a straggling frontier settlement on the riverbank and the great stretches westward a wilderness of Indians and buffalo; yet already "the corporation" was on the prairie, ordering the way of society and arranging how things were to be done. But here industry was not manufacturing, not coal nor iron nor textiles, but transportation.

There were three things in Nebraska that a man might do. He could get a job with the railroad; "every virile man in Nebraska wanted to go railroading." The private car was the symbol of ultimate success. Or he could become a merchant in money or goods. "The Burlington," said one of them, "offered my father his choice of three different sites in three different towns for his grain elevator." As a successful merchant you were sympathetic with and attached to the railroads, and railroad men remembered you.

Last of all, if he was neither railroad man nor merchant, a man could farm. He could be an independent producer on the narrowest of margins, with success dependent upon drought, grasshoppers, European crop failures, tight money in New York, stock-market rigging, protective tariffs, and combinations to fix prices. The price of barbed wire stayed put, but the selling price of the cattle fenced in with that wire was something else. Harris Franklin of Deadwood made a cattle shipment to Omaha. He got one single bid. Bullheaded, he wouldn't take it but loaded his cattle back on the cars and went on to Chicago. And there he got the same identical bid! He sold and took the loss and went back to South Dakota and quit the cattle business. But whatever happened to the farmer or the cattleman, the railroad was there, right before his eyes. He could not escape it; his cattle or grain had to get to market and the power was in the railroad man's hands. The farmer might get an occasional advantage from rate wars, rail managers might reduce rates voluntarily, but the power stayed where it was. The rail men might have to fight other men to keep their power, but they were absolutely determined that the farmers should not have it.

The farmers, the first homesteaders, knew it. Dwellers on a territorial frontier, they looked for protection not to cooperatives nor to "education," but to a great centralized authority—the Federal government. But the plutocrats had got there first; the Credit Mobilier promoters killed Federal rate regulation. So the Nebraska farmers turned to the State, not from any love of States' Rights, but because such a move was the only apparent alternative. When the convention assembled at Lincoln in 1871, four years after statehood, to revise the constitution, the fight had begun. "The legislature

shall establish reasonable rates" and pass laws to "prevent discrimination and abuses." The Nebraska City Chronicle reported Union Pacific officials declaring that the road "could well afford to spend \$200,000 if necessary to defeat the new constitution." It was defeated.

So the farmers wrestled. Here was a colony of Mennonites, there a crowd of Swedes; in between was the native American stock, and all together they undertook to make a living. For great numbers it was a desperate adventure and the sod houses of Nebraska in their time sheltered many a caged animal. "The Bohemians were good farmers, but you never could tell when one of 'em was going to hang himself."

Did they dream that civilization would bloom there? Civilization? The sins of Omaha were the more sinful because they cost money. Must they turn their fervors into local option and prohibition campaigns? What Sundays there were in the hideous drygoods boxes of Campbellite and Lutheran churches where, in the arid stretches of the sermon, the endless mortgage worry was dulled. They knew the winters with the blizzards roaring down out of the Dakotas, and the summers with the blistering heat that took the bloom from the girls and made the gaunt faces, the faces old so long before their time.

Twice a year they could breathe—once during the spring when the rain and mud were gone. Then the cattlemen in Dawes County might see the slopes of Crow Butte covered with flowers. Before winter there was the autumn with the Blue River valley turning, first yellow and then golden brown with the willows like plumes of pale bronze and the twilight sky a deep luminous blue before the full moon rose,





pale and cold. For the rest, dig in. Maybe corn will be up a dime next year.

In the late eighties there was a rain shortage—Omaha was at the tail end of a real estate boom—and a long summer with the prairie burning under a sky like brass. There followed a merciless winter and the desperate homesteaders who once had pinned their faith to the Grange now began to swell the rolls of the Farmers' Alliance. It was so throughout the country, in Dakota, in Kansas, and Texas, and Alabama and Carolina. The farmers listened no more to pious sermons on husbandry in Orange Judd publications; they had papers of their own. "Get this bargain! The Nebraska Farmers' Alliance and Looking Backward together for \$1.25." It was the great awakening, the brief springtime rebirth, the only intellectual period that the plains have ever known.

There were giants rising from the earth, exhorters and educators, country editors piecing the arguments together, the descendants of Jefferson grappling with the Hamiltonians. In Kansas was the lady lawyer, Mrs. Lease, with a highboned collar, urging the farmers to "raise less corn and more hell." A Nebraska editor told his readers: "We send the plutocrats a grim warning. . . . The twin of this oppression is rebellion [and] . . . unless there is a change and a remedy found, this day is as inevitable as that God reigns and it will be soon." "Holt County," says the commentator, "was the center of the fiercest political conflicts in North Nebraska—the only county in the State where a defaulting county treasurer was lynched by a mob of plundered taxpayers." Now let the "servile tools of the railroads," the "corruptionists" beware! So the Farmers' Revolution got under way.

But the Union Pacific was no longer alone in the field: in

'69 its great rival and coadjutor, the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy had arrived. After the Burlington reached Denver in 1882 it built or bought more than twenty-eight hundred miles of track in Nebraska and covered the southern half of the State like a gridiron. Before the railway days were over, ten roads had entered the State, but these two were chief of all. Either as enemies or as allies they divided the government of the State between them.

How admirably they were designed for government! These two great system reached into almost every town in the State; their representatives from stationmaster to local attorney were at work every day of the year. How close were the ties with the leading businessmen in each town! One of the most powerful weapons was the free pass. Favored country editors traveled on free passes and wrote the right kind of editorials. Preachers rode on passes and asked for them. In 1881 Father Seraphin Lampe writes to his Bishop in Omaha: "Did you, Rt. Rev. Bishop, perhaps see already about that pass on the B & M to David City?" See the country banker at Crete waiting with a friend for the inbound train from Omaha. The banker owns a chain of grain elevators along the line and on that train are two grain dealers. The party of four will travel down the line and get off at each town. There will be dickering at each elevator, then all four will get on another train and be off to the next elevator. All four are good friends, all four are fond of poker, and all four have annual passes. Barely has the train left Crete than the game begins. It becomes absorbing. They determine to leave the first elevator until the return trip lest they break up the game. The game becomes more absorbing and, one after another, each town and elevator is left behind until the party find themselves at Holdrege, with the game unfinished. But all have passes and here comes the eastbound express, headed for Chicago. All four genial spirits display their passes and get aboard. The game is resumed and continued into Chicago, where they get off and on another train, westbound to Omaha. The game continues; in each pocket is the trusty pass; let the cold wind blow outside. It is sweet to be the railroad's friend.

6

Could the clumsy machinery of representative government function in opposition to the railroad systems and their friends? What a contrast! Every two years a miscellaneous crowd of legislators assembled at Lincoln for ninety days to do the work of democratic government and ponder on the needs of farmers who had no free passes. There was the governor. Often he was seen in popular fancy poring over the problems of his commonwealth as he sat in a rocker in the modest executive mansion on a winter night. And, of course, there were the courts. Could this structure stand against a great railroad? It could not, because the railroads all but owned the structure too. In 1879 it was estimated that passes to the legislative members represented an investment of over \$57,000 a year and that the roads couldn't afford it unless "remuneration were guaranteed." "The election of Amasa Cobb as justice of the Supreme Court was considered a victory for the Burlington." His unlucky opponent, Judge Wakeley of Omaha, had been "for years a Union Pacific attorney." The elections to the United States Senate brought political battles to a crisis and on one occasion the general manager of the Burlington set up his headquarters in the governor's office and there received the returns from the legislative chamber.

The centers from which these powers were administered were in Omaha in the remodeled Herndon House headquarters of the U.P. and the Burlington offices at Tenth and Farnam. The chairman of the Burlington board in 1886 had his office in Boston. He was John Murray Forbes, the great banker and promoter of the road. He was closely allied with Baring Brothers and had been their purchasing agent in America, buying grain for Louis Napoleon during the Crimean War. The president of the road, Charles E. Perkins, lived part of the time in Burlington, Iowa. A graduate of Harvard College, he had married Forbes's cousin. These men were important enough but the exercise of the power in Nebraska was at Omaha in the office of George Ward Holdrege, general manager of the Burlington west of the Missouri. Mr. Holdrege was a noticeable figure with his brisk walk, his tufted eyebrows and sharp piercing eyes. A graduate of Harvard also, he had come out to work for the Burlington almost immediately after his commencement in '69. An able railroad builder and manager, he spoke very little and was an expert listener. In politics he was justly regarded as a most dangerous adversary.

In these two offices were the steering wheels of the economy of a great farm region. Thither came the favored country grain dealers and bankers; thence the orders went out for the rate wars; there were made and broken the "gentlemen's agreements" and rate pools, there the wholesalers came to beg for rebates. There the latest exploits of Jay Gould, busily unloading wrecked railroads on the Union

Pacific, were discussed and appraised. From the office windows the clerks could look out in the eighties on an Omaha in the throes of a real estate boom. And all in it and tied to it were the men and the families and the businesses who looked not to farm prosperity but to the roads for their wealth and success.

Consider the Millard Hotel with "one of the coziest hotel lobbies in the world and down floor arrangements for the comfort of male guests . . . the most approved and complete sanitary arrangements in the West. The Millard is a favorite with local societies and political committees and has long been the headquarters of the Republican State Central Committee." It might well be. Its proprietors shared with the Union Pacific the control of eighteen hotels along the line. They paid no freight.

There was the Omaha and Grant Smelting and Refining Company—long afterward absorbed by the Guggenheims—which smelted ores from Western mines. Not only were Mr. Millard and Mr. Nash and Mr. Barton, all leading Omaha citizens, in this company, but Sidney Dillon, president of the Union Pacific, and Fred Ames, son of Credit Mobilier Oakes, were large stockholders. The smelter got its ores over the U.P. and had a rebate.

There was William Paxton, who had got contracts from the U.P. in the early days and by now, along with the Millards and the Kountzes and others, was a capitalist in his own right. A huge man with a large head, rumpled buffalo-hide hair and a short temper, he was said to have defined an honest legislator as "one who will stay bought." He was in the ironworks, was a partner in a wholesale grocery, in a hotel, and a score of enterprises. He had built the Paxton Block, its brick and red-stone garlands identifying it as one of the most splendid structures between Chicago and Denver. Mr. Paxton was a partner in the Omaha Elevator and Grain Company. This company rented the building they used from the Union Elevator Company which was owned jointly by the Union Pacific, the Burlington, and four other roads. Mr. Paxton and his partners had a rebate.

Mr. Paxton was also a rancher and in the cattle business. He had a friend, Alexander Swan, whose cattle ranged from Fort Steele, Wyoming, to Ogallala, Nebraska. Mr. Swan's cattle company was capitalized at three million dollars and he had raised three-quarters of a million more to buy vast tracts of the U.P. land grant. Mr. Swan urged Mr. Paxton to start a stockyard in Omaha. Mr. Paxton with his friends did so, on land which they got from the Union Pacific. But Mr. Paxton already had a stockyard over the river in Council Bluffs, also on U.P. land, in which Nelson Morris the packer was interested. So he had two stockyards and a rival built a third yard on the Omaha side. During a rate war a cattle raiser tried to ship twelve cars to the rival yard. But the Union Pacific freight agent in Kearney said no; the cattleman could have the rate only if he shipped to Council Bluffs, where the solitary yard of Mr. Paxton, the good friend of the Union Pacific, was located. The rival stockyard did not long survive. "Who in hell wants to go into partnership with a fool," Mr. Paxton was overheard to say on the station platform; "the best way is to freeze out the son-of-a-bitch."

So these men were drawn tighter and tighter to the railroads while the town roared along in its boom, heedless of the growing wrath of the farmers. The gambling joints flourished and the show business was good.

That all-wool-and-a-yard-wide American soprano, Emma Abbott, could count on a full house in Omaha. There was an unsubtle and enthusiastic lady whom anybody could understand. The baggage that she carried filled an express car and more. When her company rolled in over the Rock Island from Des Moines on a winter morning it took a procession of drays to cart the scenery and the costumes to the Boyd Opera House. "The public patronize me liberally," she said. "They pay good prices to hear my operas and expect something in return that is worth their money. Hence I consider it my duty to stage and costume my operas handsomely." In a single year she paid Worth and Felix more than a hundred thousand dollars for costumes, and when Omaha saw the "grape dress" "of heliotrope satin with garniture of royal purple velvet and gold embroidery," they knew they were getting something. "The foot of the skirt and train are a mass of grape vines trailing as carelessly and gracefully as if placed by nature's hand. Vines, tendrils, etc., are traced in gold, while the bunches of ripe fruit are of purple velvet in appliqué, with leaves of green, outlined and veined in gold."

Thus the Gilded Age was brought to Omaha. John Creighton bought the mansard house where old Touzalin of the Burlington had lived, and put a "liquoratory" in it. The distillers and brewers came, attracted by the near-by grain supply; the chimneys smoked, real estate soared, and cornfields on the edge of the town were scored with building lots. In 1887 there were no less than thirty-one million dollars' worth of real estate transfers. Every Western town was booming. Then, without warning, the boom collapsed, but before it did a new and powerful set of landlords arrived.

On the 17th of March, 1887, the Journal-Stockman contained this item: "Mr. G. Swift, the Chicago packer, is in South Omaha today. He has been through the yards and packing houses with the Honorable John A. McShane. The presence of the prince of packers just at this time excites comment on every hand and is thought to have a deeper significance than most people suppose."

7

When on the 1st of December, 1883—after the shufflings back and forth across the river—Mr. Paxton and Mr. Swan and their friends organized the Union Stockyards Company, it was supposed that the business would consist chiefly of feeding and watering livestock on the way to Chicago. But this did not long suffice. For ten years or more there had been meat packing in Omaha on a small scale and Nelson Morris had been interested in Paxton's yard at Council Bluffs. The promoters now undertook most strenuously to persuade the great packers to come.

In the twenty years since the Civil War a small group of men had risen from obscurity and already dominated the packing business. Chicago now displaced Cincinnati as a packing center. The leading figures in the business were Gustavus Swift, a Cape Cod butcher, Philip D. Armour, who came to Chicago from Milwaukee with his lieutenant Michael Cudahy, and Nelson Morris, a German immigrant. The Omaha promoters, through a gift of land and cash and \$100,000 worth of stock in the yards, induced Swift to come. A similar subsidy was accepted by Armour, who opened a packing house in partnership with Cudahy. Banks were or-

ganized near the yard to handle cattle loans and into these banks the packers went. From now on a cattle feeder borrowed money from a packer-controlled bank and sold his livestock in a "free market" controlled by packers also.

This new development must have caused many an anxious hour in the railroad offices downtown in Omaha; it meant a division of power. At first the Burlington and the Northwestern refused cattle billed to Omaha because they wanted the long haul to Chicago. They did not refuse long; the packers were getting into the railroad boards. John Plankinton of Milwaukee, Armour's old boss, had been a director of the St. Paul as early as 1878. In 1882 the St. Paul reached Omaha, and by 1885 Armour himself was a director. The road managers had originally refused to build refrigerator cars and forced the packers to do it themselves. Now the packers, among the greatest shippers in the country, were able to exact rebates in the form of "mileage," a subsidy on every refrigerator car the roads hauled. By acting in concert they were in a position to crush competition and establish themselves as a trust.

Between the railroads and the packers, the grain growers and cattle raisers of Nebraska and the West found themselves in a vise. Under the pressure they redoubled their attacks on the courts, on the State House at Lincoln, and on Washington. On the 4th of February, 1887, Congress passed the Interstate Commerce Act. On April 1, 1888, Gustavus Swift began slaughtering beef at South Omaha. Six weeks later, on the 16th of May, Congress ordered an investigation of the packers. It was found that the packers were strongly entrenched, that they were acting in collusion, fixing the retail

price of beef in the East and squeezing the cattle raisers in the West.

The tying together of the roads and the packers was a symptom of what was happening throughout the whole American economy as it became more tightly knit. If, perhaps, Mr. Holdrege and Mr. Perkins and Mr. Forbes cursed the packers in private, they could not help themselves. As a utility the roads were indispensable; that alone gave the managers in New York and the railroad centers an advantage in the struggle to retain their power. Their hands were full, for the beleaguered farmers were now incessant in their agitation.

Affairs in the Herndon House headquarters of the Union Pacific were in confusion. Every conceivable sort of pillage was turning the road, physically and financially, into "two streaks of rust and a right of way." Charles Francis Adams, who attracted the attention of the country with Some Chapters of Erie, had been put in as president in 1884 in the hope of cleaning it up. Interest was away behind on the Federal mortgage and the setting up of a sinking fund for payments on the principal had accomplished little. Adams in '86 was writing in despair to the Secretary of the Interior: "The stock exchange is composed of men very acute, very unscrupulous, and controlling vast resources. . . . Within the last two years I have seen the stock [of the Union Pacific] worked up and down by means of the manipulated action of Congress through a range of at least 15 per cent."

Every move that Gould made in the affairs of the road damaged it further and in Nebraska towns it was thought that his rapacity was endless. He had told the people of Columbus that if they wouldn't vote the road a \$25,000

bond issue he would ruin the town. Yet the wreck still held together, Wyoming remained a U.P. pocker borough and the road's hold upon Omaha and the State was still strong. When a reporter for an Omaha paper, looking for rate statistics, went down to see the U.P. general freight agent, he was cordially received. "Certainly," said the agent heartily, "which side do you want to prove? I can give you figures for either."

The Burlington was in better shape. The road was making money and politically it had the edge on the U.P. Representing Nebraska in the Federal Senate were Mr. Manderson, presently to become general solicitor of the Burlington, and Mr. Van Wyck. There was some doubt about Mr. Van Wyck. Though he denounced "the interests," he traveled on a pass and was accused of being "the silent pardner of the railroads." It was true that trouble was increasing in the legislature, but the roads redoubled their efforts to keep control of the courts and all seemed secure. Finally in 1888 the great Burlington railway strike had been decisively broken, putting into circulation what became a Nebraska adage: "The Burlington never lost a strike."

The result of these pressures was the forming of the Populist party—the People's party—in Kansas in the spring of 1890. Into it went Grangers, the leaders of the Farmers' Alliance, cheap-money men, and silverites. That fall they voted for the first time and the election returns alarmed the railroad men and astounded the East. The rebels, "what a herd of hogs would be in the parlor of a careful housekeeper," had won four United State senators, forty-nine congressmen, three governors, and the control of eight legislatures. In the fall of '91, with conditions on the farms almost in-

tolerable and the storm warnings of a national panic plainly visible, 18,000 covered wagons crossed the Missouri. They were homesteaders, quitting Nebraska, a country under a curse. It was in this atmosphere in July, 1892, that delegates from all over the West and South journeyed to Omaha for the first national convention of the Populist party. The day fixed was July 4th. The agrarian declaration of independence was about to be given to the world.

8

The first of July, 1892, was on a Friday, and it was hot as the delegates straggled in. Ten thousand visitors were expected and, though Omaha businessmen might deride the "Populites" without mercy, the money was acceptable. Every hotel and boardinghouse was ready and waiting. Delegates in covered wagons—some had come over a thousand miles and spent weeks on the way—camped on the edge of town and skirmished for water and firewood.

General Van Wyck, "the silent pardner," was at the Paxton Hotel with his wife and daughter, Miss Happy Van Wyck. Once while the general was campaigning, he made a violent attack on the free pass. When a railroad man in the audience asked him why he traveled on a pass, the general replied: "In a war it is my practice to forage on the enemy." General Weaver, the long-mustached Populist idol of Iowa, was at the Millard. Down the hall, at Room 110, the Silver League had its headquarters.

They are coming, Father Abraham, they are coming. And with banners. "What Is Home Without A Mortgage?" said one. Terence V. Powderly, grand master of the nearly de-

funct Knights of Labor ("gasbag" was the gentlest term applied to Mr. Powderly), was expected on the morrow at nine-twenty. So were Anna Howard Shaw and Susan Anthony. Young Mr. Hamlin Garland, the literary darling of the Populists, had not yet arrived but was due in over the Northwestern at any minute. He was going to stay with his friends, Mr. and Mrs. Peattie, over on Poppleton Avenue.

Despite the presence of Mr. Powderly the railway union representatives and the workingwomen's auxiliary meeting and the general sympathy with labor demands, this swelling crowd could by no means be termed "labor." They were neither urban nor proletarian and Gompers refused to have anything to do with the Populists. Farm owners—with mortgages—predominated. They and the little businessmen from the small towns wanted "to get on" and they wanted protection in order to get on.

There were farm delegates in stiff Sunday suits and celluloid collars, there were bony-faced women with hair in doorknobs, there were young farmers' wives with children in arms. Country lawyer delegates were there and country preachers in Come-to-Jesus coats. There were country editors—sandy-haired ones with Adam's apples, sour-faced old ones, burning young ones. Here was Dan Freeman, the first man in the United States to take out a claim under the Homestead Act—located a few miles south of Omaha—and Bill Dech with "a heart as big as his feet and no shoe was ever made too big for him." There were Union veterans in blue, Confederate Populists in uniform, Negro delegates from the South, Single-Taxers, Prohibitionists, Knights of Labor, Greenbackers, and Women's Righters. Every important Eastern paper had its correspondents in Omaha; they had

come prepared to turn out derisive copy and, confronted by the lunatics and radical mountebanks, they could do it. It was a different story when they faced the farmer delegates whose faces showed so plainly the terrible mill they had been through.

Sunday, July 3rd, had been set apart as a solemn memorial service for the dead Populist hero of North Carolina, Colonel Leonidas Polk. While the platform committees sweated over their labors in the hotels, the delegates gathered. See them now, waiting for the exercises to begin. They had been jeered and taunted from one end of the country to the other; they were rurals, hicks, and jays. They were not "respectable" and they yearned to be respectable with a most terrible yearning. There were no words to describe the feelings of the farmer's wife driving into the county seat in a dress made over three times, knowing that all her dresses would be so. The thought of a pale-blue challis, never to be achieved, could wring the heart. Did they and their men feel self-conscious as they went into politics? Their beliefs and hopes were almost identical with those who had got on. This was the "farmers' rising," the defiance of the poor relations of America.

Before this whispering, restless, respectable throng, young Mr. Garland rose to read a story which he called "Under the Lion's Paw." The horrors of farm debt hung over many in the audience; they knew. When the storyteller came to his climax, with the desperate farmer turning upon the moneylender: "Make out y'r deed an' mor'gage an' git off'n my land an' don't ye ever cross my line agin; if y'do I'll kill ye" it was more than some of them could stand.

And then Mrs. Lease. Some might identify her as the lady

lawyer from Kansas, the wife of a Wichita druggist, but to others she was the heroine of rebellion. Yesterday in the Coliseum, "Our Queen Mary" as General Weaver called her, had driven the delegates frantic with enthusiasm while "the five-minute rule lay a helpless wreck under Mrs. Lease's feet." "It is deplored by sectarians," she had said, "that irreligion prevails in the West. Socialism prevails, strong individuality prevails and these characteristics, widely diffused, are the bulwarks of the nation's freedom. The orthodox church with its hypocrisy and cowardice is driving out its honest and thinking members and strengthening and fortifying the ranks of socialism.

The rudiments of empire here Are plastic yet and warm, The chaos of a mighty world Is rounding into form . . ."

She had swept them along until finally, flinging her arms in the air, she cried: "The West is the natural reservoir of liberty." And from the back of the Coliseum had come a booming voice: "A-a-men! Let the People say A-a-men!"

This was the lady, in a black-and-yellow dress, with "a voice with the depth of a trombone, easily heard in the remotest part of the hall," who was the star of the afternoon. "The prairies of Kansas," she said, "are dotted over with the graves of women who have died of mortgage on the farm." There was weeping. At the last, when Colonel Polk had been extolled, the solemn gathering rose and sang: "We Shall Meet in the Sweet Bye and Bye."

These preliminaries prepared the delegates for the Fourth of July when the platform was brought in. The committee had been put to it in order to satisfy Southerners, mountain silver people, and plainsfolk whose most insistent cry was "Railroads." The task had been done, however, and the enthusiasm—"A-a-men! Let the People say A-a-men!"—with which the delegates received each plank proved it. The platform got more cheers than the candidates. Government ownership and government aid from a government captured and run by the "little men" was the core of their thought.

The convention, it was plain, was no routine Republican or Democratic raree show in which all the hoary old shibboleths were brought out by "railroad cappers" and dusted off. The platform meant something. There wasn't a plank in it that the delegates could not instantly recognize. All this was what they had argued out at home, sitting up at night in farm kitchens. Country editors who, in their smudged weeklies, had urged on the cause, glowed with exultation. Nuckolls and Red Willow Counties were one thing; this was a national convention, the first one of the party that might give each one a chance to realize his own ambitions and dreams and maybe restore the "liberty of the people" at the same time. Few of the delegates dreamed that it was not only the first convention, but practically the last; that four years later they would be seduced by a silver-tongued careerist with a panacea. No. Now the future was bright.

This was, in fact, almost the high point of the agrarian enthusiasm. Never again would they believe and feel this way:

The interests of rural and civic labor are the same; their enemies are identical. . . . Transportation being a means of exchange and a public necessity, the government should own and operate the railroads in the interest of the people . . . a just,

equitable and efficient means of [currency] distribution direct to the people, at a tax not to exceed two per cent per annum, to be provided as set forth in the sub-treasury plan of the Farmers' Alliance. . . . The land, including all the natural sources of wealth, is the heritage of the people and should not be monopolized for speculative purposes . . . a graduated income tax . . . government owned telephone and telegraph . . . the Australian ballot . . . the initiative and the referendum . . . eight hour day . . . no subsidy or national aid to any private corporation for any purpose.

Then they proceeded to nominate, and having fixed upon the Union General Weaver for the first place on the ticket, they almost automatically accepted the Confederate General Field for the second place. He was the same General Field who had declaimed:

> All hail the power of the People's name, Let autocrats prostrate fall; Bring forth the royal diadem And crown the people sovereign, all.

Almost while they were cheering their candidates, on the night of July 5, 1892, a boatload of Pinkerton detectives moved up the Monongahela River above Pittsburgh and began the attack on the men barricaded in the Carnegie Steelworks at Homestead. If it was all up with the propertyless steelworkers in Pittsburgh, it was all up with the farmers and little businessmen at Omaha. That fall they voted and polled over a million votes and twenty-two in the Electoral College, but the tide already was turning; they had fallen behind 1890 in many of the States. Though the farmers of Nebraska had successes still to come, though they would elect a governor and send "windy Allen," the "honest judge of Madison," to the Senate, their great effort had failed. The Burlington and

the Union Pacific and all the Eastern industrial power which these two names represented in Nebraska were still in control. Mr. Olney, the Burlington's general counsel, had just been made Attorney General by Mr. Cleveland. He wrote the frightened Mr. Perkins:

The [Interstate Commerce] Commission, as its functions have now been limited by the courts, is, or can be made, of great use to the railroads. It satisfies the popular clamor for a government supervision of railroads, at the same time that that supervision is almost entirely nominal. Further, the older such a commission gets to be, the more inclined it will be found to take the business and railroad view of things. It thus becomes a sort of barrier between the railroad corporations and the people and a sort of protection against hasty and crude legislation hostile to railroad interests. . . . The part of wisdom is not to destroy the Commission, but to utilize it.

No, the farmers were licked. The little man's day was over. Four years later in 1896, when they gave their souls to the boy orator of the Platte, Mark Hanna and the Wall Streeters beat them for good and all.

9

Quite accidentally, the rout of the Populists and their ideas was celebrated by the victors at Omaha in 1898. There, from June to November, was held the Trans-Mississippi Exposition. What had commenced in the dark days of '95 as the mad scheme of a few Omaha men and other Western capitalists to help revive trade, turned out to be a stunning advertisement of American business and returning prosperity. Only a few days before the fair opened, the war with Spain began. The admired sculpture of the time might have repre-

sented this at Omaha with an allegorical group: Triumphant business enterprise crowning itself with laurel and reaching for the sword at the same time.

Some Omaha businessmen looked cross-eyed at the idea of a fair. Where was the money to come from? But they didn't all feel that way, least of all Gurdon W. Wattles, a former Iowa banker who had come to Omaha on the eye of the panic of '93. Of all the promoters of the exposition, Mr. Wattles was the most ardent and the most vocal. He had gone through a strenuous youth on a poor Iowa farm and had accumulated a number of small-town banks before he sold out and came to Omaha. Investing a part of his accumulation in a bank, he set out to be an energetic citizen. He joined right and left, wore a mustache and a stiff collar, spoke at luncheons and did it all with a high moral tone. Not for him the bibulous habits of Count Creighton-who had received his patent of nobility from Leo XIII in '95-nor the raucous ejaculations of Bill Paxton. Those two worthies still lived, but the old-timers, the pioneers, were passing from the scene. The new types for the new era were in sight. Wattles was it; the twentieth century go-getter had arrived in Omaha and the Trans-Mississippi Exposition gave him the chance to show what he could do.

The main trouble was in raising the money, but Mr. Wattles and his colleagues could not be daunted. The Street Railway and the Gas Company chipped in ten thousand apiece and so did Mr. Kountze, the banker; the Stockyards Company and the New York Life Insurance Company were good for five thousand and so was P. D. Armour. "Influential citizens made frequent trips to New York, Chicago, St. Louis and elsewhere for the sole purpose of inducing officials

of insurance companies, railways, packing houses, etc., to make subscriptions to the capital stock of the exposition." For a time the railroad people doubted the whole thing, but finally Mr. Holdrege was persuaded to go over to Burlington and see Mr. Perkins. Once upon a time a locomotive engineer on the Burlington bought his wife a silk dress. Mr. Perkins was outraged at the extravagance and denounced it. But the exposition was another thing. He put the Burlington down for a donation of thirty thousand dollars, and the other roads fell into line. Work on the exposition proceeded apace and the fair was opened on the 1st of June, 1898. It was a triumph and everybody in Omaha knew it.

During the worst of the hard times one could catch a streetcar on Farnam Street and ride out through a sad part of town filled with building lots which, after the real estate collapse of the eighties, had gone back to cornfields. Here in this tract, not far from the river bluff, a depression had been scooped out for a lagoon and round it were built, out of plaster of Paris and excelsior, a group of glittering white buildings. The architecture, "freely inspired by the classic and the renaissance," had no relation whatever to the life history of the plains and mountain country. Nor was it intended to have. More even than an advertisement of Omaha and the West, the fair was a reflection of the state of mind of its promoters. It was like a shot in the arm to leave the well-worn corner of Sixteenth and Farnam, with all the familiar feeling of everyday Midwestern existence and step inside an enclosure half a mile long, all set about with "old Ivory" domes, sodded grass plots, flaming canna beds, and Corinthian columns. Flights of broad stairs looked down on

a sheet of Missouri River water, dotted with gondolas and buttressed with dead-white balustrades.

The Fine Arts included Bouguereau's "Return of Spring": "a life size figure of a young woman surrounded by cupids and flowers. The picture, valued at \$50,000, came into prominence years ago when hung in an art loan exhibit in Omaha. At that time a young man, Cary J. Warbington, threw a chair through the canvas, which was subsequently repaired." For the men, Little Egypt would shake that thing in the Streets of Cairo and Judge Dundy's gambler son, Skip Dundy, had the concession for the Infant Incubator. This experience was enough to send Skip to New York to build the Hippodrome, and Luna Park at Coney Island. But the chief place—after the pavilion of the Federal government was provided for—was reserved for the now politically impotent Agriculture.

The victors could afford to be generous and they were. Cass Gilbert, the young architect of St. Paul, was selected to design this mausoleum, "free Renaissance" also, with its garlands of wheat, corn, and fruit tinted in brilliant colors. To crown all, "the monotony of the sky line was relieved by statuary represented by a fine group—Prosperity—supported by Labor and Integrity." Where was the sod house now? What would Mary Lease have said of this temple to Pomona and Ceres, two ladies never yet seen in the cornfields of Nebraska? What of Charlie Wooster, the member from Merrick County who had opposed the State appropriation on the ground that the fair was "a scheme gotten up by and for the benefit of Omaha bankers." No. All envy, all complaint was dumb in the face of the splendid show.

"The mission of the exposition," said the acidulous Mr.

Ingalls of Kansas, "is to communicate to mankind the impulses to which it owes its origin." Mr. Wattles certainly could agree to that. Fittingly enough, a conspicuous place was given to a huge plaster warrior in a chariot drawn by four lions and inscribed simply: OMAHA.

"Not a cloud marred the perfection of the cerulean vault . . . all the cardinal and semi-cardinal points of the compass converged at Omaha" on that first of June. A platform had been set up at one end of the shimmering Grand Court and on it, facing the crowd, were the notables. There they were: President Wattles in his top hat, with General Counsel Baldwin of the Union Pacific near by. The U.P., down and out at last, had been bought at auction only a few months before, in November, 1897, by the Harriman syndicate. There was a St. Louis parson to offer prayer and the Honorable John L. Webster, variously Union Pacific attorney and counsel to the Street Railway, to listen to the prayer. And there was the Populist governor, Silas Holcomb, sole representative of another bankruptcy, far more disastrous than that of the Union Pacific. All were waiting in the white, hot sunshine for Mr. McKinley to press the telegraph key in Washington.

The message came; the parson prayed. Then Mr. Wattles took off his top hat and faced the crowd. "Fifty years ago," said he, "the larger part of the country west of the Mississippi River was . . . indicated on the map as the Great American Desert. No less than 80,000 miles of railroad have been constructed in the Trans-Mississippi country during the last fifty years at the fabulous cost of two thousand million dollars . . . Great cities have been built and manufacturing has assumed enormous proportions . . . This

magnificent exposition, illustrating the products of our soil and mines and factories . . . will pale into insignificance at the close of the twentieth century. When the agricultural resources of this rich country are fully developed . . . when the sugar as well as the bread and meat for the markets of the world shall be produced here and carried to the markets by the electric forces of nature; when the minerals in our mountains and the gold and silver in our mines shall be extracted and utilized by this same force; when our natural products shall be manufactured here, then this Trans-Mississippi country will support a population in peace and plenty greater than the population of any other nation in the world. This exposition . . . opens new fields to the investor, inspires the ambition of the genius, incites the emulation of states and stands the crowning glory in the history of the West."

If anybody had told Mr. Wattles that within forty years the Middle West would be a network of bankrupt railroads, a region with dwindling manufactures, a declining population, and with agriculture in the toils, the banker would likely have thought him insane. For on that day in Omaha there was about to begin what was later known as "the Golden Age of Nebraska." There were long and bitter complaints of embalmed beef in Cuba, but the packers who had helped to back the exposition provided no exhibit of army meat at Omaha. No. "A month ago," said the Honorable Mr. Webster, "the American people were disposed to cling to the traditional policy of isolation; today they received with patriotic enthusiasm the doctrine of annexation and conquest." The Star of Empire had become Manifest

Destiny, but the main offices of the new goddess were in the same place—New York City.

10

The budding McKinley prosperity burst into bloom in Omaha on the night after Christmas, 1899, when Mr. Herman Kountze, the banker, and Mrs. Kountze requested the pleasure of a select company of guests at "one of the swellest dances of the season" at Metropolitan Hall in honor of General Cowin's daughter, Edna, who was to marry Jack Cudahy, the son of Mike, the packer. A few, whose real estate nest eggs antedated packer money by all of twenty or thirty years, may have muttered something about pork millionaires, but such remarks could come only from envious carpers. Two days after the party the wedding took place, "one of the most fashionable ever witnessed in Omaha."

It was indeed a mystical union—the age of the pioneers was about to be joined to the age of the trusts. This wedding in a little inland city reflected the change that had come over the economic landscape. A European crop failure in 1897 had made a great void which American grains could fill. Gold on the African Rand, soon followed by the Klondike and the discovery of the cyanide process for gold extraction, settled the hash of the Free Silverites. But more important still, the American industrial establishment, if not complete, was at last on its feet and the dependence on European capital was over. The interest drain was slackening and industry now turned toward exploiting the home market. By 1900 farm prices had caught up with manufactures and, from then until the World War, Nebraska farmers

could draw breath-and most of them forgot what the Populist days had taught. While General Shafter was winning Santiago "by correspondence" and the crowds at the Omaha fair were singing "The Girl I Left Behind Me," John W. "Bet-a-Million" Gates in the same year, 1898, was organizing the American Steel and Wire Company that foreshadowed U. S. Steel. (The Western cartlemen had known him as Jack Gates, the barb-wire salesman.) All through the nineties the trusts had been forming in that golden East to which Union Pacific and Burlington officials had looked for orders since the Middle West began. Nebraska businessmen, in a modest way, had aped the trusts and Nebraska farmers had learned from bitter experience about the Nebraska Grain Dealers' Association. Through this tiny trust, the Omaha Elevator Company and its rural associates had been able to screw down the price of grain and, through the assistance of the railroads and local banks, do all they could to put the co-operative elevators out of existence. Now, at this solemn moment, the absentee landlords were to receive the benediction of the Church.

At the high altar was the Reverend Father Dowling. He was the president of Creighton College. The great benefaction had been the chief interest of Edward Creighton's widow and other rich men of the early days had remembered. As for Count Creighton—his white beard could be seen daily on Farnam Street—the takings from his Montana mines, Omaha business blocks, and other speculations were poured into the institution. Those days were almost over and the blessings of God, which flow from age to age, must be watered from new sources.

Before the reverend father stood the bride, swathed in

tulle, leaning on her father's arm and surrounded by her attendants in white broadcloth and ermine. In the early days General Cowin had had the bad judgment to run for Congress on an antirailroad ticket and the roads had seen to it that he got no political preferment, then or thereafter. But only recently, the recalcitrance of youth gone by, he had had a sweet revenge. When in 1897, after thirty-four years of plundering and wrecking, the Union Pacific was completely down and out, McKinley had picked General Cowin to represent the government in the foreclosure of the mortgage. For this the general received a fee of a hundred thousand dollars.

So, erect and with white mustaches, the age that was past stood in the midst of the flowers and the music and the burning tapers and the bridesmaids with their velvet hats and white plumes, ready to hand on his daughter to the age that was waiting before. If Packingtown in South Omaha was a grimy place, if skinners and meatcutters were restive about their pay, that fact did not appear to disturb the young bridegroom, the representative of what was soon to be called the "greatest trust in the world." Jack Cudahy had come out from Chicago to learn the business at the Omaha plant under the oversight of his uncle Ed. He was an exceedingly popular young man. If he did not comprehend what he owed to the forces that made his money, if he chose instead to beat his blundering way long after, as one of the "idle rich," to darkness and suicide in Hollywood, nevertheless on the morning of December 28, 1899, he was the representative of the new age.

It was frequently said that both Mike and Ed Cudahy had to toe the line when Gustavus Swift and P. D. Armour

told them to, it was said that the Cudahys were at the small end of the trust, but small or not, they were one of the Big Five and everybody knew it. They knew it so well that a few months later, on December 18, 1900, Pat Crowe kidnapped Ed Cudahy's fifteen-year-old son Eddie and held him for a ransom of twenty-five thousand dollars. Crowe, finally brought to trial, was acquitted by an Omaha jury which, according to a local paper, "seemed to admire Crowe's strategy in prying that much money loose from a millionaire." By degrees packing, along with the stockyards, had become the great industry in Omaha. What was left, when the packers and the railroads were satisfied, might go to local capitalists and municipal politicians.

So General Cowin left the church, taking the frontier era with him, while the happy pair went out to start the new century. "Never," said the Excelsior, "did any young couple in Omaha more auspiciously set sail upon the sea of life." At the station, attended by Pryor, the steward of the Omaha Club, was the Olivette. All new and shining from the carshops, it was the first private car ever chartered out of Omaha that did not belong to a railroad official. The packers and the roads, Edna and Jack. What God hath joined, let no man or circumstance of history put asunder. Ora! Ora pro nobis!

II

If, by any chance, young Mr. and Mrs. Cudahy stood on the back platform of the train as it rolled across the Missouri River bridge, they could have seen the sprawling little city of 100,000 spread out before them. Toward the south were the smoking stacks of the packing houses and the gray blur of the stockyards. Farther north, on the summit of the riverbank, was the City Hall with its tower, the red dressed stone of the Omaha Bee and the New York Life Building. Down the slope from the summit came the chief streets of the town—Farnam and Harney and Douglas and Dodge—past Mr. Jonas Brandeis's "Boston Store," past the Paxton Hotel, down toward the wholesale district near the river and the old "Third Ward," in which was the segregated district, the stronghold of the boss of the town—Tom Dennison.

Tom Dennison, a gambler and for more than thirty years the political administrator of Omaha, came there in 1890 after getting a start in the mining towns of the West. Beginning as a silver prospector, he found more money in chance. His joints had boasted names familiar to mining camp legend: the Opera House Gambling Saloon, in Leadville, and the Board of Trade, at Butte. Reputedly the representative of a gambling syndicate, he found Omaha what it had been from the beginning—wide open. Mr. Dennison, immediately upon his arrival, called upon the president of one of the banks. After depositing seventy-five thousand dollars, he told the president that the bank might use fifty thousand of it as they saw fit. The banker seems to have recognized a kindred spirit.

Rival gamblers presently found their houses closed by the police; they were not allowed to reopen. The new influence was extended. Before 1900 Dennison's control went far beyond his gambling interests and he was the "boss" of the town. The consolidation going on in business everywhere was being organized in vice. Dennison's own income was supposed to come from his gambling house. The saloon and

vice revenue was carefully parceled out; a part of it went to support Dennison's henchmen. His partner, one Billy Nesselhous who survived until 1937, was the proprietor of the Budweiser Saloon on Douglas Street and here, in a small back room, the walls plastered with the photographs of prize fighters, actors and politicians, Dennison had his office.

A tall man with a large frame and a big-boned face, Dennison was in the familiar tradition as a municipal boss. He was supposed not to drink or smoke. He was never sick. He "always kept his word." He was said to be the head of an organization of saloonkeepers and gamblers who devoted a part of their takings to charity. He would occasionally indulge in a quixotic and extravagant generosity, as when he insisted on sending a consumptive wayfarer to the Southwest in a Pullman drawing room. But more than this, "he was strong for big business." It was the function of this man to act as the business agent of the great absentees and the dominant local business interests: to run the machinery, turn in the requisite majorities, and collect the tolls from gamblers, saloonkeepers, and whores-tolls that swelled the bank accounts of those same local interests. To do all these things required ruthlessness, tact, and calculation. Dennison had these skills; he performed his function expertly, and during those years, when he was in his prime, ambitious politicians came from other cities to study his machine much in the way Chris Magee had come to New York from Pitrsburgh long before to study the ruins of the Tweed Ring and learn what not to do.

Dennison had a mayor, one James Dahlman, a man of great charm and affability, who kept a sort of open house at the City Hall and was known to everybody as Jim. Originally a Texas cowhand, Dahlman had followed the cattle trails to Nebraska and for a number of years before he came to Omaha had been ranch foreman and sheriff in one of the cattle counties. Regularly at each election from 1906 until his death in 1930—with one memorable exception—Dahlman was returned to office; he became known as the perpetual mayor of Omaha. He made no attempt to exploit his office—indeed, he died broke—but placidly, and without interference, ran the routine administration of the town. The actual machinery was in the hands of Dennison, whose files "contained the names, political affiliation, character and weakness of almost every voter in the city."

To the favored businesses went paving, building, printing contracts, and the furnishing of city supplies in general. The dispersion of the vice revenue was a vital concern to these businesses. This revenue was large. By 1911 it was estimated that the number of prostitutes practicing in Omaha was over twenty-six hundred-counting the inmates from the best known houses to the most squalid. The most ambitious venture of this character was the "Arcade," a huge bawdyhouse opened in 1907, which covered four blocks and was surrounded by a high iron fence. This resort, brilliantly lighted and operated under police protection, contained three hundred "cribs," for which each of the three hundred girls paid two dollars rent a day. Such a piece of real estate promotion was bound to attract attention; it proved too lurid even for Omaha, and was closed within a year. But otherwise the business flourished and the passage of an eight-o'clock closing law for saloons in 1908 had the effect of increasing the liquor business done in the whorehouses and simultaneously put saloons "formally" into the business of prostitution. The income from the combined liquor-whore-gambling interest was prodigious.

In 1911 an analysis was made of the income of twelve large establishments housing eight inmates apiece. It was estimated that the *net earnings* from these twelve houses were in excess of half a million dollars per annum. From the deposits made by these twelve houses an official of one of the banks estimated that the "daily balance would indicate that the banks may safely rely on a million dollars as loan basis." The regular monthly expense of one of these houses was figured this way:

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$300 Police protection
220 Girls' expenses ($27.50 apiece)
200 Physicians' fees
100 Lawyers' fees
3000 General house expenses: liquor, provisions, servants, and maintenance
300 "Waste from thefts and otherwise"

$4120 Average monthly expense
$8000 Average gross monthly income
4120 "monthly expense

$3880 "monthly net
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From the physicians who attended the girls and from the lawyers who represented them, Dennison collected a percentage. His most trusted lieutenants included a Negro and a Jew who superintended the vice business for these minority groups. And the spendable income? It was spent in specified department and furniture stores, wholesale liquor houses,

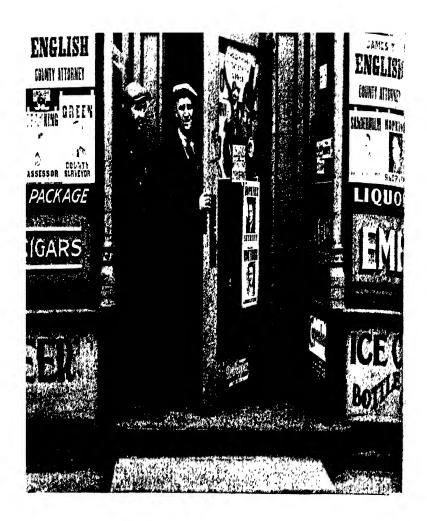
breweries, groceries, creameries, and coal yards. The population of Omaha in 1910 was 124,000. "The average yearly income from all the houses—including their liquor business—for the years 1905 to 1911, figuring on a total of 370 houses with an average of seven inmates apiece, was \$17,760,000." Out of such sources, one remove from the farms, came the prosperity of Omaha in the Golden Age. A legion of pimps, who rustled business for the girls, helped to staff the Dennison machine and, given protection in exchange for good behavior, the town acquired a reputation as a hideout for fleeing criminals. Fainting Bertha, the pickpocket, was a familiar figure and there were many more.

But whoring was the great money-maker and when the red-light district was closed in 1911 and the girls dispersed to hotels and roominghouses, it continued to be so. At his death in 1937, the fortune of Billy Nesselhous—from whatever sources—was estimated to be two million dollars. When Dennison died in 1934, an old man and through with political science, it was found that his estate had largely been disposed of. But a profound stillness covers the bank accounts of those Omaha families who for more than a generation exploited not alone the labor of their "fellow citizens," but their pleasure as well.

The establishment of Dennison as the boss and coordinator completed the pattern for Omaha in the day of the "triumph of business enterprise." The city had reached its maturity; it reflected in little the closely knit economy of the great financial centers to which Omaha paid tribute. It was essential that the railroads maintain their control over the State and in March, 1905, Mr. Newbranch, the Lincoln correspondent of the Omaha World-Herald was writing to



5. A DROVER IN THE OMAHA STOCKYARDS



## 6. THIRD WARD DEMOCRATIC HEADQUARTERS

"Gambling Must Go Says Reformer . . . Fainting Bertha in Omaha Again . . . Who Favors Segregated District? . . . Opium Joints in Omaha Will Not Be Tolerated."

When Tom Dennison, the boss of Omaha, was in his prime, the Third Ward was his stronghold.

his paper: "The House this morning yielded up the pound of flesh to the last drop of blood and laid it, all dripping and gory, on the already overladen altar of the allied railroads lobby. J. H. Ager and the two Bobs-McGinnis and Clancey-took possession of the offering and bore it reverently to the headquarters of Lee Spratlen [Mr. Holdrege's lieutenant] over in the Lincoln Hotel, from whence go out the daily instructions which the legislature is required scrupulously to follow." In Omaha the railroads and the packers dominated the stockyards. Thus, when Count Creighton died in 1907, his place as director of the Stockyards Company was taken by Mr. Spratlen. Since Mr. Spratlen had been a member of the Omaha Fire and Police Board, the circle of railroad influence was complete. A step down from the absentees was a handful of Omaha businessmen who dominated the local economy. It was the function of Dennison to act as the agent of these men. Though occasionally the lines blurred, the pattern was clear. Between these businessmen-merchants and bankers-and Dennison there was a gobetween, a businessman whose office, by general consent, was accepted as the clearinghouse for business with "the hoss."

This tightly meshed machinery did not run of itself; it had to be carefully watched. There were always disgruntled people who were trying "to clean up politics." Occasionally there were politicians who elected to side with "the people." Once a group of dissatisfied businessmen, who were not admitted to the favored circle, attempted, with the assistance of a renegade lieutenant of Dennison's, to oust the boss. They dared not meet in Omaha, but negotiated by stealth in a Kansas City hotel. It was shortly after midnight

on one of these occasions, when the door burst open and one of Dennison's men walked in to say: "How are you, boys? I heard you were here and just dropped in to see how you were getting along." After a long and tense moment, the agent—never sure whether a gun would be pulled or not—turned and left the room. One more revolt had been broken. When, in 1914, the Omaha Daily News embarked on some local muckraking, it was endured just so long. Then one day the offending reporter, Charles Driscoll, was set upon in the court house and beaten within an inch of his life. He bears the marks to this day. But in general things ran smoothly. To complete the control of the local interests only one more thing was necessary: labor must be kept down. It was.

12

One of the financial landmarks of the town was the street railway. By 1902 Mr. Wattles had become interested and owned nearly five thousand shares in it. An energetic man, he and his associates now proceeded to reorganize the company, float a large bond issue, and acquire by lease the Council Bluffs Street Car Company and their most precious possession, "the Bridge," a toll bridge and the only highway bridge of any kind that crossed the Missouri at Omaha. This bridge—which until the present hour has been an endless bone of contention in Omaha—was popularly regarded as a gold mine. With the streetcars and the bridge and the common stock, Mr. Wattles and his friends were now ready for riches.

This was the day when electric traction was just rising

to its brief prosperity. Charles Yerkes, the traction boss of Chicago, had made a sensational success and he had imitators everywhere. Simultaneously came the rise of the street-car union, the Amalgamated Association of Street and Electric Railway Employees, and in August, 1902, an organizer arrived in Omaha.

He set to work and had enlisted a number of street car workers before the foolhardy men were fired. Mr. Wilson, the organizer, then appeared before the directors of the company and, according to Mr. Wattles, made the astonishing statement that the union desired no contract, no closed shop, indeed, no advantages of any kind. The directors were impressed with a union of this type and took the men back. Mr. Wilson faded out and the union faded too. Whether or not Mr. Wattles and his friends took warning from this strange episode is not clear. But the next year, 1903, there was set up the Omaha Business Men's Association, its membership confidential, and with the prime purpose of keeping Omaha an open-shop town. Through its intermittent activity ever since that time the Association has succeeded in its purpose and since 1903 there has scarcely been a successful strike of any kind in Omaha.

The aim of the Association was "purely defensive, and made necessary . . . by the apparent determination upon the part of the labor organizations of the city to either control or ruin every business enterprise." No record exists of the reflections of Mr. Dennison on this remarkable statement, but neither the age of Mr. Paxton nor that of Mr. Wattles could show any glowing triumphs for the unions. The great Burlington strike of '88—which introduced Pinkerton guards to Nebraska—had been a disastrous failure for the men, and

the carshop strike of '94 also. It was during the Burlington strike that Judge Dundy had conveniently issued an injunction that acknowledged a man's right to strike but made it unlawful for him to refuse to handle cars!

The streetcar men continued restless and in August, 1909, after several failures to make the union stick, a national official of the Amalgamated came to Omaha. This time there appeared to be a better chance for success, and on the 2d of September the men presented their demands for recognition and a contract. It was refused. On the 14th a committee went to see Mr. Wattles. Would he arbitrate? "There are some things in this world," said Mr. Wattles, "that you cannot arbitrate." Was there intimidation over the question of joining the union? Mr. Wattles denied it. At the end of several hours' discussion Mr. Wattles announced his decision: "Now, I am not a timid man either . . . I say to the union men, if they quit the employ of this company, there will never be another union man employed by this company . . . I have prepared this company for a strike, and I have men employed waiting to take the place of every man who quits . . . this company will go right along and operate its cars; if necessary under the protection of government itself."

Mr. Wattles was indeed prepared. He already had made arrangements with Waddell and Mahon of New York, the leading strikebreaking firm in the country: 1133 Broadway; Phone, Madison Square 4582. Just before the strike broke the executive committee of the Business Men's Association "unanimously resolved . . . that the association approve the attitude of the Street Railway Company and would give that company its support." On the committee was the Dennison

go-between! Then, on Sunday morning, September 19, 1909, the first of the Waddell and Mahon plug-uglies rolled in—they were not yet known as "nobles" and "finks"—and within two days five hundred of these thugs were in Omaha under the command of Jim Waddell himself. The barricaded carbarns, already equipped for a siege with cots and commissary, awaited them. With police protection without and their own firearms within, the gang was ready for action. "Where the police department is not able to handle the situation," said Mr. Waddell, "we bring along a complete hospital corps . . . [none] is needed in Omaha."

It had been said that some of the packing house superintendents felt uncomfortable when guards were brought in in 1904. It had seemed like turning gunmen loose on "their neighbors." There was no such feeling now. On the same Sunday afternoon when the Waddell gang arrived, these neighbors, motormen and conductors, paraded. Already the guarded cars were rolling through the streets and collisions between the strikers and the Waddell men occurred almost immediately. "In all ordinary conflicts," said Mr. Wattles, "the [the strikebreakers] effectively used the iron switch rods or the trolley controllers on the cars . . . " The strikebreakers had been advertised as motormen and conductors of the Brooklyn Rapid Transit Company and the Chicago Street Railways, but they turned out to be the old reliable brand of strikebreakers after all. "Very little of the money collected by the strikebreakers reached the treasury of the company," Mr. Wattles admitted, "but as a rule, they were a jolly lot of disreputables . . . They did not know the sensations of fear and were always ready for a fight . . . It was said that the conductors divided their collections with the motormen, and again with the lieutenants at the barns, who, if all reports were true, were as corrupt as the operating men . . . but it is very difficult to record a word of criticism against these strikebreakers . . . so, whatever their faults might have been, they were forgotten by the officials of the company and by the public generally." Mr. Wattles's consciousness of rectitude never faltered once. "If I wake up on the other shore," he said, "and have it to think all through eternity that I did not violate my solemn obligation to the men in my employ, it will be a happy thought." As the strike went on there were various attempts to negotiate, but Mr. Wattles would not arbitrate and he was determined that only those would be hired in the future who would agree to join no union. The strike would be settled on a "yellow dog" basis or not at all. The line-up against the union was solid, all resistance was crushed and by mid-October the strike was broken. "No compromise was made," said Mr. Wattles triumphantly, "and the strikers were defeated. The union was destroyed."

But it had been costly, doubly so since strikebreakers were thieves. As he thought it over, it occurred to Mr. Wattles how wonderful it would be if all the American streetcar companies could band together and build up out of their own labor a strikebreaking organization, which could be moved with great rapidity anywhere. "Such an organization among the principal street railway companies of the country would prove an effective standing army," was his feeling. Was it possible that the Omaha banker was ahead of his time? Could an industrial dictator dream of anything better—or cheaper?

13

"The Golden Age of Nebraska" was now approaching its meridian and it was powerfully reflected in Omaha. During these years real estate investments along Farnam Street increased from five hundred to a thousand per cent. The attacks of muckrakers on the packers revealed the extent of their power and wealth. In 1905 Mr. Wattles's bank merged with two others and became the United States National of which he was eventually chairman. "At the close of the fifteenth year after consolidation the dividends paid in cash and stock and the increase in value of the original stock showed an average annual return to the shareholders of twenty two and one-half per cent for the period." The basis for this prosperity was farm prices. This so-called golden age was the interval when American industry had largely paid its debts to Europe and had not yet exploited the home market to the point when capital, in search of profit, would go abroad. So, between 1900 and 1910, the average value per farm in Nebraska had risen from six thousand to sixteen thousand dollars. In 1911 the purchasing power of corn stood above the prices paid by farmers for manufactured goods. Though the prices of hogs, grains, butterfat, and livestock varied from year to year, the averages gave the Nebraska farmers an edge and many of them were in the money.

Concealed in this prosperity were signs of great changes. The farmers originally were a confused group of homesteaders and aliens, dissimilar in skills, ability and temperament, and speaking half a dozen different languages. The re-

sources of the land in which they settled were imperfectly understood, if they were understood at all. By 1910 the attrition of the soil was discernible in the plains region, but not many discerned it. The agricultural schools, by precept and example, had been laboring for years to increase the productivity of the soil and had succeeded, but they could only advise. A vital factor in this prosperity was the rise of land values, and with the rise came an increase in tenantry. The original settlers had been owners. Every farm depression had its train of foreclosures, the long drought of the nineties worst of all. By 1900, when farm prices were "stabilized," thirty-six per cent of the farms of Nebraska were operated by tenants. This rising percentage continued to rise, not only in Nebraska but throughout the region between the Mississippi and the edge of the plains. As land prices rose, many farmers retired and, as little absentees, became chair rockers on the front porches of Lincoln and other towns. Furthermore, the rate of population growth was beginning to slow down.

At the same time, through a confused and highly complicated series of actions, the power and influence of the railroads were changing. The day of speculative fortune in the railroads was over, as Mr. Morgan was to discover with the New Haven. The exploits of Harriman in rebuilding the Union Pacific actually meant the farewell of the empire builders. And as this era faded, the direct political dictation of the railroads faded also. Was it because such dictation was no longer necessary? Was it that capital in seeking new fields for exploitation had left the railroads not a business, but in some mysterious way an *institution* that could defy change? Apparently it must be so. In 1905, after being

beaten in the Republican convention by the Union Pacific-Northwestern forces, Mr. Holdrege began his retreat from active politics. Through these years, in 1903, 1906, and 1910, great powers had been given the Interstate Commerce Commission, but the great maze of the rate structure remained to defy them, as it has defied them ever since. The doctrine of fixing the rate base on "what the traffic will bear" was by now so firmly fixed that no power on earth, apparently, could ever bring order out of the baffling confusion. Though the railroads were privately owned, their institutional character was inescapable.

An institution, not a utility! Already rigid and with lime in its bones, the railroad rate structure was left to choke and dam the stream of economic life. Increasingly as time went by the Jay Goulds of a later day, the New York bankers and promoters, would find it highly profitable to promote bankruptcies and reorganizations. That would come with the old age of private ownership. But as it was, the institution was safe. In the name of the widow, the orphan, and the insurance company, in the name of the economy itself, the railroads must be preserved. What had been predatory and omnipotent had become sacred and immovable. As individuals so often grow to resemble institutions, so also did the railroad families and businesses of Omaha become sacred and immovable. Was it possible that those families that were born with the Union Pacific would in the end die with it?

On the 15th of June, 1914, the Panama Canal was opened. If there were persons in Omaha who realized what the effect would be on Middle Western railroad towns whose prosperity as distribution points depended on favorable differentials, those persons made no great outcry. Did they

foresee a time when to ship plows from Moline to the Atlantic coast and then bring them around through the canal to Pacific ports would be cheaper than to ship directly west via Omaha? They did not. The attention of the world was fixed upon Europe; Liége had fallen and the German Army was advancing on Paris. Finance capital in America had come of age; the end of Nebraska's golden time was in sight.

Yet no one knew it; agriculture was flourishing, farm prices and land prices were rising. It took a long time for the war to reach these people; they enjoyed the prosperity and they were opposed to the war. It was not until Omaha businessmen discovered that patriotism and profit were joined that the farmers found out what had happened to them.

It was in 1917 that the Non-Partisan League entered the State and began to organize. Omaha businessmen hired a detective and planted him in the League offices as a spy. The State Council of Defense and various State administrators of war activities included numbers of Omaha men. This put them in a position where they could denounce as treasonable any move that threatened to interfere with their private interests. The "red" scare was raised; League meetings were smashed, an organizer was mobbed and threatened with hanging. He barely escaped with his life. It was in the midst of this campaign that the Dennison machine broke down.

14

Over a period of time there had been troubled consultations in the back room at the Budweiser Saloon. The farm vote had carried a State prohibition law through in 1916, which hindered the Omaha saloon business, some. Military regulations for the benefit of the forts near by had hindered the vice business, some. Furthermore, there had been disagreements with a number of his lieutenants and the boss himself, the man who was never sick, had been ill. The result was that in May, 1918, the perpetual mayor, Cowboy Jim Dahlman, was defeated. The forces of reform—an ill-assorted company of disgruntled businessmen, prohibitionists, preachers, and hard-worked schoolteachers—won the election and presented the city with a new mayor, a righteous lawyer named Ed Smith. Virtue had triumphed; the day of the Third Ward was over.

Mayor Smith had come in on the vice issue, but the unfortunate man discovered that vice was not enough, even though "every little place hidden away from the road is a trap for our boys and girls." The year before, in June, 1917, there had been a building strike, an attempt by some of the long-frustrated labor unions of Omaha to grapple with the war boom and the rising cost of living. With the efficiency and zeal come from long experience, moves were made to smash the strike. "Evidence showed that many employers were anxious to confer but were prevented from doing so by the Business Men's Association, who did not approve of employers meeting with committees." Could it be, was there a possible chance that the Business Men's Association was useful in dominating small businessmen as well as labor unions?

The governor, at length, was moved to appoint a committee to investigate and appointed a chairman who was himself a member of the Association! One morning in June, armed with notebooks and papers, the Committee gathered in the City Hall at the top of the hill and prepared to take testimony. They took fifteen hundred pages of it, but, though they begged and besought, not an employer would come. Day after day the long procession of witnesses filed by, telling the same interminable story. The unions had been unable to negotiate; their employers told them that the question was up to the Business Men's Association. But when the union men went to see the secretary of the Association, he told them that the Association could not deal with union representatives. It was strange. Business was booming and some employers quoted with unctuous approval the statement of the Secretary of Labor: it was, for the unions, "the height of disloyalty to force or bring about a stoppage of our industries in order to force the establishment of standards that they have not been able to force during normal conditions!" Did Mr. Wattles nod with satisfaction? Were there guffaws in the Budweiser saloon?

The chairman began to get uneasy. He wrote to the Association and asked for mediation. Nothing doing. But the unions claimed that the Association "exists for only two purposes, namely: to prevent organization among the wage earners and to drive the small contractor out of business." Still nothing doing. The Committee sat; the employers would not testify. At last, after six weeks, the Committee threw up the sponge and handed in a report.

This was the state of affairs that faced Mayor Smith; it was a condition that could not be handled by the closing of whorehouses. There had been a strike in the packing houses and it failed. In June, 1919, there was a teamster strike and it was broken by strikebreakers. A few days later there was a strike at the stockyards and it failed. The mayor did not

disapprove of strikebreaking; feeling against him among workingmen became bitter.

Meantime the mayor and his police commissioner were busy purging the town. The morals squad was constantly at work; there were raids and, as the commissioner put it, "a medical specialist in social diseases [stated] that the business in this line had decreased 75%." The effect of this sort of action on the Dennison treasury was disastrous; something would have to be done.

Then there began a most curious press campaign, which increased steadily. The new administration, with its exuberant righteousness, was an easy target—Mayor Ed most of all. A short, stocky man with a square head, he champed his jaws and talked righteousness interminably. He had thought to be a doctor, but, said he: "I took account of myself and found that I was naturally of a combative, contentious disposition. That didn't seem to suit the doctor business, so I took to the law." Then the press campaign got him.

The attacks multiplied, scorching the administration for its laxity in dealing with Negro attacks on white women. Stranger still, these rape cases collapsed upon investigation. A Negro railroad workman was accused and denied the charge. It was necessary to bring the payroll time books all the way from Chicago to prove that he had been over a hundred miles away at the time the assault was supposed to have been committed.

All through the hot summer the campaign continued. In the town were soldiers, just home from the war, looking for jobs and finding none. The world had been saved for democracy—hadn't the local papers said so?—but earning a living was something else. And the teamsters, eying the strikebreakers, were boiling. Then on the 11th of September, two detectives making a "morals squad" raid on a hotel, shot a Negro bellhop and killed him. Now if the administration, which had inherited a police department which had been staffed and built up in the Dennison days, should by any chance make a misstep at this juncture, who could tell what might happen? And what would happen to reform and the forces of virtue at the next election?

On the night of September 25th a girl named Agnes Lobeck called the police in great distress. She had been walking with a crippled acquaintance, one Millard Hoffman, when suddenly a Negro appeared who beat up Mr. Hoffman and then attacked Miss Lobeck. The next night the police picked up a packing house worker named Will Brown. He was a Negro. They took him to Miss Lobeck's house for her to identify him. She did. A mob gathered round the house and the police barely got Brown away and into jail. The jail was on the upper floor of the courthouse at the top of the hill, directly across from the City Hall where the governor's committee had sweated over their fifteen hundred pages of testimony.

No sooner was Brown in a cell than the extras were on the streets. Another assault! When will these outrages cease! All that night and through the next day the tension grew. Businessmen shook their heads; it was a God-damned shame. What was Smith up to? Why, his law firm had actually been retained—just a few days ago—to defend another Negro on a similar charge. Housewives discussed the case across their porch rails. A lawyer examined Brown in the jail; he found the man badly twisted with rheumatism and wondered how

anyone in such a condition could have assaulted anybody. It was very strange.

Saturday night the town was full to overflowing; the bars were busy; the farmers from roundabout were in town, doing their buying. "It is known that at least one party on Saturday night went about to the various pool halls in the south part of the city and announced that a crowd would gather at Bancroft School and from there would march to the courthouse for the purpose of lynching this colored man. These reports were current about the city and were known in certain official circles and just why this prisoner was not moved to the state penitentiary or some other suitable place for safe keeping, has never been satisfactorily explained nor why these officials did not appraise Mayor Smith . . ."

The next day was Sunday. Shortly after noon a crowd began to gather around the courthouse, hooting and yelling, talking in groups on the street corners. Police kept them on the move occasionally, but nothing further was done. It was an intensely hot day and many prudent householders kept their Sabbath shades drawn to escape the blistering heat. The crowd got bigger. "A police captain . . . released fifty police officers . . . and sent them to their homes!"

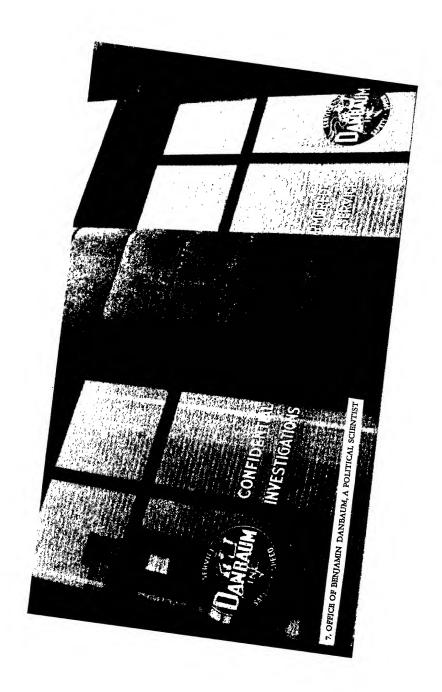
Toward sundown a nervous sergeant at the courthouse telephoned for help. "In fifteen minutes a patrol wagon responded with a few." Inside the courthouse the guards were walking nervously up and down, while the prisoners, both white and black, felt the mob slowly closing in. "Shortly after dark . . . older and more determined men were observed to take their places with the boys. They were composed of the most vicious element in the city . . . these men seemed to have definite work to do. That there were leaders

instructed in their part is borne out by the testimony and the events. Some led the way to sporting goods houses, the pawnshops and the wholesale hardware stores for guns and ammunition. Others gathered up a crowd to gather gasoline for the burning of the courthouse."

The firing began; men hooting and yelling, waving pistols and discharging them into the air. On the fringes of the crowd—at a safe distance—the curious gathered to await the fascinating horror. A man was going to be done to death and anybody could watch. A woman from a small town in Iowa, visiting in Omaha, persuaded her friends to take her to the movies that she might see the mob. A boy, on a horse, rode back and forth through the crowd, with a rope laid across his saddle horn.

By eight o'clock the screams of "Give us the nigger" had commenced and the mob was in the lower floor of the court-house. Snatching open the drawers of filing cases, they deluged them with gasoline and set them afire. At nine-thirty a cop escaped from the courthouse and ran to a near-by fire station for help. He said the smoke filled the building and that the police commissioner and some of the officers were there. The fire engines responded; instantly the mob cut the hose away from the fire hydrants.

At nine-fifty the mob seized one of the fire ladders and raised it toward the jail windows on the top floor. The prisoners screamed to the guards for help, demanding that Brown be surrendered to the mob. He was. And then, at ten o'clock, down the courthouse stairs and out to meet the mob, came the mayor—alone! The strikebreaking, vice-purging, righteous-mouthed mayor, leaving behind the police commissioner, the officers, and the guards who lost their





nerve, faced the screaming crowd and demanded that they disperse.

"Lynch the mayor!" In an instant a rope was found, a noose made and the helpless Ed dragged along the pavement and then hoisted off the ground. Like magic, an automobile shot into the crowd and who but Detective Danbaum snatched the unconscious mayor down and got him into the automobile and away. A miraculous thing! Or was it? At once, the frustrated mob turned back to the surrendered Negro and strung him to a trolley wire.

The lady visitor from Iowa emerged from her movie at this juncture and in terror fled to a streetcar, which within another moment was wedged tight by the advancing mob. The car did not move for two hours. A horrified sophomore, who was leaving the next day for school, stood on a corner and watched the mob as they milled about the dead and mutilated body and finally flung it in a bonfire. Then with a thunderclap the storm, which had gathered all evening long, broke. The rain fell in torrents, flooding the gutters, washing down the hill toward the old Third Ward, the embers of and relics of this Corn Belt auto-da-fé. At three o'clock in the morning, when all was over, troops from near by Fort Omaha, arrived to lock the door after the horse was gone.

Next day Major General Leonard Wood arrived to take charge. He got more and more befuddled. "One of the first steps toward the preservation of law and order should be the suppression of a rotten press where there is one," said he. "I am strong for the freedom of the press where it is honest and fearless; gives facts, not lies." Two days later he felt that "labor organizations came out squarely on the side

of law and order." Finally he could say that "just one agency was to blame for all this—that was the I.W.W. and its red flag, the soviet organization of this country."

But the terrible rumor grew and grew that this mob had been planned, that the men who went about that Saturday night spreading the word for the lynching were acting under orders. "The interests" of Omaha had been faced by their fellow townsmen, their "neighbors," who worked for them and wanted a bigger share of the takings. And home-coming soldiers were asking questions they never asked before. And those who sat in the back room of the Budweiser Saloon and looked to the boss for commands had had their income shut off by a bunch of "Jesus screamers" in the City Hall who wanted to smother every crap game and lock up every whorehouse in town. If, by any chance, the hapless Ed Smith and his police commissioner should get into water so hot that it boiled over, what would happen to them the next election day? The word "evil" can cover a multitude of sins, but an administrator should be careful that it does not cover gamblers, bootleggers, labor unions, prostitutes, and unemployed veterans at the same time.

On September 30th the Omaha World-Herald's editorial page carried the ringing words that stirred the country to admiration and brought the fortunate paper the Pulitzer Prize. ". . . It is over now. Thank God! Omaha henceforth will be as safe for its citizens and as safe for the visitors within its gates as any citizen in the land. Its respectable and law-abiding people comprising 99 per cent of the population will see to that. . . . There will be no more faltering, no more fecklessness, no more procrastination, no longer the lack of a firm hand. . . . May the lesson of Sunday night

sink deep! May we take home to our hearts, there to be cherished, and never for a moment forgotten, the words of the revered Lincoln: 'Let reverence of the Law be breathed by every mother to the lisping babe that prattles on her lap. Let it be taught in schools, seminaries and colleges. Let it be written in primers, spelling books and almanacs. Let it be preached from pulpits and proclaimed in legislative halls and enforced in courts of justice. Let it become the political religion of the nation!'"

On the next election day, in May, 1921, the Dennison majorities rolled in; there was thanksgiving in the back room in the Budweiser Saloon and the gang once more had control of the city. Finis coronat opus!

15

On October 30, 1919, just a month after the Omaha riot, the young Non-Partisan League organizer, Beryl Felver, who had been mobbed and almost hanged the year before, sued for damages. The list of defendants included a country editor named Horace M. Davis, Joseph P. McGrath, general agent of the Thiel Detective Agency, and a number of prominent Omaha businessmen. Among them were Gurdon W. Wattles, who had been honored with appointment as war food administrator of Nebraska, and Mr. James E. Davidson, of the Nebraska Power Company.

Though Mr. Davidson had been in Nebraska but a little more than two years, he was already one of the leading citizens of Omaha. He was the resident representative of the latest of the great absentee landlords, the power industry which had its headquarters in New York.

Remote control of public utilities, even in Nebraska, was not a new thing but it did not become common until about the time of the World War. Then began the buying up of light and gas plants all over the country by distant holding companies. One of the most powerful of these organizations was the Electric Bond and Share Company; in 1917 it arrived in Nebraska and took over the Omaha Electric Light and Power Company. This utility the Electric Bond and Share reorganized as the Nebraska Power Company and then—at a handsome profit—conveyed a large part of the new securities to its affiliate, the American Power and Light Company.

The whole transaction, with its stock watering, now went through the traditional process. Once more the Middle West was going to be milked for the benefit of distant promoters. On the 31st of May, 1917, the Omaha Electric Light and Power Company closed its books with a fixed capital of \$6,432,000. On the next morning, when the Nebraska Power Company was first shown to the world, that fixed capital had more than doubled and become \$13,500,000. The excess capitalization of \$5,000,000 or more was utilized for the issuance of a huge block of common stock to the American Power and Light Company. It was this huge block of common stock-most of it water-which brought the golden stream of profit to the controlling interests and drained off the excess earnings of the Omaha property, or rather its excess collections from the consumers. Federal Trade Commission examiners found the rate of return to the American Power and Light Company on the ledger value of its common stock investment in Nebraska Power to be 96.8 per cent in 1927! Though rate cuts were conceded from time to time,

the cost of production was cut too and profits rose steadily. In 1930 common stock dividends had grown to \$1,200,000 a year.

It would not do to set this siphon going in Omaha and forget the responsible men of the town. Though the management of the Power Company was in the hands of utility men and the control exercised from afar off, most of the directors were local businessmen. Who were they? Mr. Holdrege, in the sunset of his glory as chief of the Burlington west of the Missouri, was one. Mr. George Brandeis, the merchant, became a director a little later. Mr. J. A. C. Kennedy, counsel to the street railway, to the packers, and to numerous railroads, esteemed as perhaps the ablest corporation lawyer in Omaha, was a director also. There were others. So the long, long history of the distant landlord was repeating itself. How many years had gone by since Oliver Ames had bought shares in Joe Millard's infant bank, since the ambitious Andrew Jackson Poppleton had become counsel to the Union Pacific Railway at the age of thirty-three!

In 1928 nine out of fifteen directors were Omaha men. At the price paid, these local directors had received in dividends as high as 160 per cent in a single year and there was "an agreement by which, when a director retires, his stock is purchased by the American Power and Light Company" at 150 per cent in excess of what he paid for it. Rome in her prime does not ignore the local chiefs in Gallic villages.

To be sure, the success of the Nebraska Power Company was not achieved without effort and resolution. In the manufacture of power the company was efficiently administered; politically it was no less efficient. The iniquitous idea of public ownership, a bequest of the Populists, was not new in

Nebraska. Even in Omaha, after prolonged exertion, a little group had managed to get the city into possession of its own gas and water. Who could tell how much further these things would go? As the railroads had done in the past, so now the power companies turned to the legislature.

Five absentees had holdings in Nebraska, among them Stone and Webster, Insull's Middle West Utilities, Utilities Power and Light, and United Light and Power. But chief of all was Electric Bond and Share. In November, 1937, this holding company's Nebraska Power produced sixty per cent of the power consumed in the State. Perhaps it was reasonable that this outfit should bear the burden of confining popular government as closely as possible to academic theory. On December 17, 1925, the manager of the Western Public Service Company was writing to Stone and Webster:

Mr. K. R. MacKinnon, general superintendent of the Nebraska Power Company in Omaha, an Electric Bond and Share Company, also attended the meeting and after the meeting came on up here with Mr. Parks and me. From him I learned that in the past, bills facilitating municipal ownership presented in the State legislature had been fought successfully by the Electric Bond and Share and Insull, but that during the last year or two, Insull had more or less withdrawn his support, leaving the Electric Bond & Share to carry the entire load.

But the Nebraska Power Company must do more. It must not only be powerful and profitable; it must in the very act be high-minded, enlightened, and farsighted. The power companies must show, as one utility man said, "that public utilities are community advertisers, owing to the fact that organized community life is commercially, industrially, and socially built around their services." This one of the Power Company's many tasks was onerous; it was essential that the executive should be a true community builder; and that Mr. James E. Davidson certainly was.

The utility business ran in the Davidson family. Before his arrival in Omaha, in February, 1917, Mr. Davidson had been the general manager of one of American Power and Light Company's subsidiaries in Portland, Oregon.

He was admirably designed to be a public figure. In business he was astute; numerous persons thought him a genial man. He was indefatigable in his exertions for the Red Cross and other organizations of indubitable merit. He did great service for the Ak-Sar-Ben and the grateful organization made him its King. He was a Shriner and an Elk. More than this, he was intensely interested in the new-found art of public relations, in the building up of his utility as an institution. It was profitable and it was educational. God and Mammon were joined.

Samuel Insull is popularly supposed to have initiated the great power-propaganda campaign of the boom years. Before it was over, the changes had been rung on almost every known form of propaganda. In due course these efforts were felt in Nebraska.

There lived in the little town of Ord a man named Horace Davis who was the editor and publisher of a small country paper, the Ord *Journal*. Mr. Davis was an energetic man and, though he lived in a traditionally Populist region, he had never been infected with strange doctrine. A little man, he would be helpful to big business. When the Non-Partisan League came Mr. Davis feverishly engaged himself in helping to combat the red menace. So when the power companies set up the Nebraska Committee of Public Utility

Information, Mr. Davis was made its director. "Our committee," he said, "came nearer to being an outgrowth of the movement in opposition to radicalism than any other thing."

Mr. Davis was diligent in spreading the word. He watched the legislature, he drove about the State, he prepared a textbook "used in every high school in the State where there is a gas plant and every normal school in the State." He worked hard. "We filled orders," he said, "only on written application from teachers, but I will confess that the secretary did some urging to get the applications in." He developed an animated correspondence with one J. B. Sheridan who occupied in the State of Missouri a position similar to Mr. Davis's. "Some time ago," he wrote Sheridan, "the directors agreed that it was unwise to talk much about the free space they grafted from the press, to which I agree heartily." His work as a cultural undercover man was arduous and he could reasonably echo his friend Sheridan's sentiments: "What have the State committees on public utility information done? In four or five short years they have just about changed the entire trend of economic and political thought in the United States. That's all." The tide rolled on. In that same year, 1925, Mr. Davidson was elected president of the National Electric Light Association. Not long after, the Nebraska Power Company was awarded a prize for the "Most Constructive Public Relations Campaign carried on by a Light and Power Company in Local Territory."

Mr. Davidson did not take his new responsibilities lightly. On the 15th of August, 1925, he wrote to the chairman of the Association's educational committee:

I have read with a great deal of interest your letter of July 1 and also those of August 11 and 12 to Mr. Aylesworth about

the work of the Education Committee doing everything possible to right the unfortunate situation that now exists in having textbooks that are in the hands of pupils of the schools containing erroneous and unfair information about the economics of our business and particularly those pertaining to electric light and power companies, their financial matters, operations and policies. . . . You have my very best wishes for a successful result in the very important work which you are undertaking.

The educational efforts were redoubled, the Power Company's reputation grew, its profits soared. Yet, while Coolidge prosperity filled the company's coffers, all was not well with Omaha nor with the State. It was mysterious that while the power industry flourished, out in the State economic life drooped and withered. In Omaha itself the quickening influence of the boom was felt briefly and then died out. In 1924 the Burgess-Nash department store failed; a year later a long-established wholesale house followed it. The high year for money spent in building was 1925; thereafter a decline set in. Still no alarm was felt; "the residents of the cities and towns [of Nebraska] were nearly all prosperous, except common labor, and as a result, the volume of business was good." The source of the trouble was on the farms and the trouble was growing more serious.

Perhaps some strange premonitions began to come over Mr. Davis. He still wrote his friend Sheridan he wanted to join him at Hot Springs, he wanted to compare notes, he had just finished reading *Henry Esmond*. But some ferment was in him. "Been to bed and can't sleep," he wrote Sheridan; "some of these times I'm going to get a piece of soft pine and a sharp knife and whittle out a conscience that will let me sleep when other people do." Mr. Sheridan had doubts

and was writing to a Nebraska acquaintance: "The bankers in the electrical industry do not appreciate what a fat thing they have had in the past seven years. They do not appreciate the enormous value of the monopoly feature. They do not appreciate that electric light and power properties are not loaded dice to be employed in a craps game in which investors and the public are injured."

Mr. Davis's discontent increased. To a fellow manipulator of public opinion he wrote:

They look upon me as . . . a hired man. I have been on the job seven years this month without vacation or a day's loss of time. Have done more single-handed work than any director, as well as being secretary for two organizations on the side, and have drawn less salary with decidedly limited budgets. . . . It is decidedly humiliating to have to keep selling yourself to your own people, who have a right to know if you are delivering and who should and do know, but who do not realize it just because they become so accustomed to things being quietly done.

If Mr. Davis was discontented, his friend Mr. Sheridan was grim. "Yea, men are a little breed," he wrote to a friend. "Possession of property breeds liars and cowards. The man who invented private property was a mortal enemy of the human race." And this was the man who, a few years before, had wanted to see a public ownership speaker "thrown in a ditch and to hell with him." Whatever the causes may have been for Mr. Sheridan's turmoil, in the end it was more than he could endure. In April, 1930, he killed himself.

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The suicide of Mr. Sheridan and the frustration of Mr. Davis almost coincided with a historic event—the stock mar-

ket crash of 1929. This catastrophe in the industrial East had had a long foreshadowing in the West. Independent agriculture was bogging down and there was no sign that it would rise again.

Briefly, this was the situation: The Civil War broke the political power of agriculture. Industry thereafter had at its disposal great subsidies in the shape of tariffs, bounties, and land grants. In addition, huge sums of European capital were poured in. The expansion of industry began and in the case of the Middle West it first took the form of the railroads which brought in settlers and for more than a generation controlled local government. The profit from these ventures was carried East and partly used to pay the interest on European debt. Later came the great packers and the grain speculators and their profit also was carried eastward. Last, in point of time, were the Wall-Street-controlled power companies and the great dairy corporations. The process was one of assisting development and simultaneously milking the Middle West of every possible dollar.

One of the most conservative economists in Nebraska has put the case this way: "The major part of the capital which has been used to develop Nebraska towns has not been brought in from outside the State. . . . In the final analysis the railroads, factories, residences, business blocks, and other improvements of Nebraska have been built quite largely with Nebraska capital. In all probability the capital taken out of the State exceeds in amount the capital brought into the State."

That one result of this exploitation would be the gutting of soil fertility was foreseen by only a handful of persons in the agricultural schools and on the farms. But it was true none the less, and it was possible that the day might come when, deprived of a market and with the soil wealth gone, the Middle West would become, not a desert, but one vast rural slum.

By 1900 American industry was no longer in urgent need of European capital; its plant was established. There ensued a period of fifteen years when, seemingly, agriculture and industry had struck a balance. If anything, farm prices had the edge on manufactures. But actually the big profit for the farmer was in the rise of his land value. A few realized this and began selling out. During those fifteen years events had occurred which pushed agriculture farther below industry than ever.

On the one hand, the individual industrialist had been succeeded in power by the banker. The development of the trusts had hastened the concentration of wealth, and by the time Morgan put together the Steel Corporation in 1901 finance capital was coming into its own. The age of interlocking directorates put the economic control of the United States into the bankers' hands.

Meantime there had been significant developments in agricultural export. The United States ceased to be the great agricultural supplier of the world. Not only were Africa, South America, and Australia exporting foodstuffs and fibers, but American capital was going abroad to assist this competition. The great years of animal and meat export were over by 1908. But Swift and Company were establishing themselves in South America, and while that fact may have brought joy to the sons of Gustavus Swift, it boded no good for the cartle raisers of the West.

Then came the World War. To supply Europe with food

and ammunition, both American industry and agriculture were expanded to the limit; the prices of both foodstuffs and farm land soared; Nebraska farmers put under cultivation every acre possible and often mortgaged themselves to the hilt to do it. At the end of the war the huge demand was suddenly cut off; the effect on farm prices was catastrophic, and in no State was the fall in farm income so great as it was in Nebraska. No less great was the fall in land values. A wave of State bank failures began that continued through the twenties. When wheat finally reached the bottom in 1932 it sold for twenty-five cents a bushel, the lowest recorded price in five hundred years.

The Middle West was left after the war with its huge farm development and a constricted market. The East was left with its huge industrial plant, a constricted market, and a huge reservoir of ready money. The collapse of the Middle West began. The East tottered and then straightened up again; capital, outward bound, was lent abroad, especially to a wrecked Europe, and a part of these loans was spent to buy American goods. But Europe had been damaged beyond repair; the age of the dictators brought with it higher tariff walls. We would not let European goods in and they would take less of ours and they could not pay their debts. In 1929 the whole structure fell with a crash and the world depression began.

The incoming New Deal in 1933 found American industry without a market, American agriculture without a market, and with the liquid capital, as of old, draining into the Eastern banks. Through the sale of bonds the New Deal distributed largess to the starving, it shored up private debt with loans, it endeavored haltingly to resuscitate international

trade. Thus, it was thought, American consumers might buy goods and food, thus both export and the domestic economy might be rescued. Through crop control, the New Deal cut the agricultural acreage and gave bounties to the farmers. So farm prices might be bolstered. It incidentally extended a hand in protection of labor organization, it expanded the military establishment, it assisted the conservation of natural resources, and it gave aid and encouragement toward the public ownership of power. But Federal largess found its way promptly back to the great Eastern banks and the milking of the Middle West went on much as before. The New Deal could not or dared not get at this concentration of Eastern wealth.

When to all this were added the three terrible drought years of '34, '36, and '37, the Middle West was brought to its knees. In 1937, for the first time in our history, agricultural imports exceeded exports. Dust storms clouded the whole region of the plains; erosion had done its work, tons of topsoil had either been blown away or borne down the Mississippi. Now it was clearly seen that the population was shrinking.

For years the rate of population growth in the Middle West had been slowing down. After the war came the greatest migration of modern times, the move to the Pacific Coast. Those Middle West farmers who had sold out at the height of the boom moved to California to spend their old age. They were followed by busted farmers who hoped to get another start. At the same time another sort of migration was going on all over the country. The cities were sucking in people from the farms. Omaha felt it. As the folk from the farms and country moved, the little Nebraska towns

shrank and had trouble in paying the bills for local government. Then in January, 1938, when the Census Bureau published its estimates. Nebraska showed an absolute decline with fewer people in the State than in 1930. If migration had swelled the numbers on the Coast, the great bulk of the population increase was in the sacred "official territory," the region north of the Ohio and east of the Mississippi where the largest part of the nation's manufacturing was done. The Middle West was "drying up"; the exploiting East was doubling back upon itself. Across the broad landscape lay the railroad wrecks; memorials to the forces that broke the power of agriculture so long ago. The rate structure had long since passed the point of comprehension by any living man; in 1938 it was estimated that no less than five quadrillion separate rates were in effect in the United States. Of the ten railroads that enter Omaha, seven were insolvent in 1937. The golden age had left a bequest of "more than 47 per cent of Nebraska farms operated by tenants and the majority of these tenants rented the tilled land on a crop share basis."

How was Omaha to face this future? It depended on the farms, and though business could go along on its momentum for a time and live on the fat stored up in the Golden Age, the fat could not last forever. Into Nebraska in 1937 the Federal government had poured fifty-seven million dollars, excluding social-security allotments, to help keep an agricultural economy afloat. If it became plain that the future of the farms and the Great Plains could not be handled through individual effort, what would happen to the little magnates of Omaha? For so long they had ruled the roost with no thought but for their own interest and now they must fight for their control. One of the pillars of the com-

munity, breathing stertorously, grunted with longing for the old days of railroad power: "We were like an army; we obeyed orders and got in on the gravy. I used to wear a uniform and I wish to God I was wearing a uniform now." Could retail competition be kept out? Could manufactures be induced to come? Manufactures had never flourished in the State and, discouraged by freight differentials, many had left. Meat packing is the most important manufacturing industry in Nebraska and is fairly stable. Where, at the war peak, more than ten thousand had been employed, by 1935 the number had declined—partly because of speed-ups and technological improvements—to 4,896—fewer than in 1912! The advance and retreat of manufactures from the region could be seen by 1935:

Number of jobs in manufacturing in Omaha:

1899	 14,000
1919	 21,000
1929	 16,000
1935	 12,000

Years before, the Populists had recognized that whatever the private sentiments of the local banker and the railroad manager might be (numbers of them were interested in tree planting and animal husbandry) they were, functionally, the agents of the distant money power. When to these figures were added the packing-house superintendents, the power-company managers, the representatives of the dairy corporations and their legal support, the local cast of characters for absentee landlords was complete. These agents in the Middle West, along with the local business leaders, were now confronted with the task of getting what juice they could from a sucked orange. Dennison died in 1934. Vanishing

prosperity had removed the need for a political boss and he had no successor. But there was labor. "Labor costs are lower here because Omaha industry must cut some place and labor takes the rap." Shut off a State income tax, prevent homestead tax exemption on the farms, and hold labor down; on such a platform the Omaha interests might fight. And none too soon, for in the autumn of 1933, with a record of thirty years of defeat, the streetcar union gathered itself together for one more effort. The promises of the New Deal were ringing in their ears and they had the famous Section 72 to protect them. Could they make a go of it this time? "Omaha is the best open-shop city of its size in the United States," trumpeted the Business Men's Association. "In its population of 216,000 persons, less than 3,000 are members of organized labor unions, excluding railway brotherhoods."

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Mr. Wattles was no longer president of the Omaha and Council Bluffs Street Railway, but he had worthy successors and they now prepared for action. Organizing went on, men were fired "for cause," and the union, in the shadow of the Blue Eagle's wing, appealed to the N.R.A. Labor Board in Washington. The company's counsel stated that "for more than a generation our men have been happy" and that "we are very, very interested that our reputation be not impugned." These impressive statements of good will were followed by conferences, but the conferences dragged on and finally, in April, 1934, large numbers of the men struck.

Next day there arrived in Omaha Mr. Richard Blume, secretary of the Regional Labor Board, whose offices were at

Kansas City. There followed a consultation, according to the papers, in the offices of the Associated Retailers, at which there were present Mr. Blume, representatives of the packers, Mr. Davidson of the Power Company, and A. A. Ahner, "industrial relations counsel for the streetcar company." There was no announcement, however, that Mr. Ahner was an experienced strikebreaker, that he had a reputation as "an employer of thugs, sluggers, and armed guards in his strikebreaking activities, a planter of labor spies in factories and labor organizations . . . and is notorious in the St. Louis industrial area for successful terrorism in his chosen field." No, the men in Omaha did not know this, nor did they know that Mr. Blume was well acquainted with Mr. Ahner.

Mr. Blume, within two days, told the men that their differences would be arbitrated. The arbitration took place, but the men found the award extremely dubious and in July, 1934, they had the bad judgment to strike again. Once more Mr. Blume came to minister to them, but not for the last time! An upheaval in Kansas City dislodged him from his position. When next the Omaha case came up for a Labor Board hearing Mr. Blume, who had twice presided over the case in a quasi-judicial capacity, appeared as cocounsel for the street railway company!

Months went by; the endless shuttling back and forth of appeal and argument went on. In these maneuvers, subsequently reviewed by the National Labor Relations Board, the union did not show to advantage. The company's tactics, on the contrary, were adroitly conceived. In opposition to the union's demand for an election to determine representation for collective bargaining, the company contended that it had actually negotiated with the union and no elec-

tion was required. The Labor Board upheld the company. On the 20th of April, 1935, the men struck for the third time. A few days before, the Omaha papers had carried announcements by the company that a local protective agency had been hired to "protect the company's property" and that about a hundred men had been employed. This was the Midwest Adjustment Agency, headed by Mr. Ben Danbaum, the detective who had performed the seeming miracle of rescuing the unhappy Mayor Ed Smith from the hands of the mob sixteen years before.

From then on the strike moved swiftly to a crisis. The City Council voted an emergency police fund. A munitions manufacturer, Mr. A. S. Ailes, of the Lake Erie Chemical Company of Cleveland, became alarmed about the situation. Were the Omaha police fully prepared? Enraged streetcar motormen might undertake to pillage and sack the helpless city of Omaha. True, Mr. Danbaum's agency was not without arms; its arsenal included two Thompson submachine guns, a half-dozen sawed-off shotguns, and other weapons, but who could tell what might happen in an emergency? Mr. Ailes hurriedly wrote to one of his salesmen:

Enclosed find copy of a letter we have just written to Mr. Danbaum. They apparently have a pretty serious situation on hand and I do not believe that they have near enough gas to handle it. The ordinary inexperienced officials are inclined to look upon an expenditure of \$4,000 or \$5,000 worth of gas as a huge sum, but at the same time they will spend \$45,000 or \$50,000 for less effective protection. Gas, in general, as used in Omaha is at the great disadvantage of being present in insufficient quantities. . . . I trust that while this difficulty continues, you will keep in touch with the Omaha job, because Federal Laboratories will have their whole darn sales force up there

within a day or two, and of course they will come along with their usual statements that their gas is far superior to ours and a customer is liable to fall for these stories, if he has not attained the results he would like to get with the gas he has been using.

... We consigned to them [the police] at Mr. Danbaum's request twenty-four Lightning Universal Tear Gas and K.O. Candles of the burning type, so that they could try out the nauseating effect.

... We, of course, will be anxious for details of what success was attained with our gas.

These handy goods, shipped by chartered airplane, duly arrived in Omaha. Feeling was rising to the flash point. The point was reached, street fighting broke out, a man was killed, another fatally wounded, and many injured.

In the midst of the tumult the governor suddenly acted. He put the city under martial law, shut the streetcars up in the barns, and demanded arbitration. Once more the interminable chaffering began and then, when the scabs applied for an injunction preventing the award from being put into effect, the buffaloed governor washed his hands of the affair and said that "the tram company broke faith immediately after the national guardsmen left Omaha."

A frustrated attempt, through martial law, to settle this thirty-year-old problem had cost the State of Nebraska \$34,000. What did the street railway spend? We cannot say. But the city comptroller on examining the company's financial report for the year found that the most significant item in it was \$223,330 for "miscellaneous expenses" as against \$17,239 the year before. What was the \$223,330 for? Strike-breakers? Armed guards? Flowers for those killed during the street fighting or masses said for the repose of their souls? We do not know. We only know that Mr. Danbaum's agency received more than \$170,000 for services duly ren-

dered. The efforts of labor to organize in Omaha continue, the C.I.O. is busy in the packing houses, but the streetcar strike is still going on, three years after. The cars are running, the scabs have got their jobs, and Mr. Wattles, having long since passed to that other shore of which he spoke with such feeling in 1909, may rest in peace. His precepts have been gloriously upheld.

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Now on the parched and harassed plains the rains are falling once more and there is new hope. Along with the attempts of the New Deal to bolster farm prices have gone efforts toward flood control and soil conservation. After years of disappointment, perhaps the Missouri River will be open for barge traffic before much more time is past though on January 1, 1939 the last of the large candy manufacturers in the area quit. Two more factories were about to give up. Where, in 1933, a number of power projects had been undertaken with Federal assistance, now they are combining with the little municipal plants to form a grid system. This development is largely the result of Senator Norris's years of labor for public power. Finally it is now proposed to buy out-with money acquired through the sale of revenue bonds to New York bankers-the interests of a number of Eastern holding corporations but already mysterious stumbling blocks that threaten the enterprise appeared in New York. The Electric Bond and Share remains holding the fort.

Yet, whatever promise there may be in electric power, the fact cannot be avoided that the chief working occupation of the region is commercial agriculture carried on by individual farmers. The prospects of commercial agriculture are bleak indeed. If the resources available for absentee exploitation diminish, the exploitation continues nevertheless and east-ward the attenuated stream of profit pours.

It is now forty-six years since Frederick Jackson Turner read his memorable paper on the closing of the frontier, but though the frontier of Bill Paxton and Count Creighton is gone, the thought that dominated Omaha in that day dominates it still. Surrounded by the ghosts of a vanished past, the local banker murmurs: "The railroads have been so good to us." O Pioneers!

## SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

## THE EDGE OF THE LAST FRONTIER

"Oh, stand firm for the old, simple, immutable things." -James J. Hill at the opening of the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition, June 1, 1909

"I don't know of any business in the United States that there is as much individuality about as there is in the lumber business in the State of Washington as it is conducted to-day."

-William Mack of the Slade Lumber Company, 1914

"The I.W.W. appreciates the individual. He has got something above the sordid rotten existence . . . he is nearer to Almighty God than any other political propagandist that I know of."

—J. V. Patterson, President of the Seattle Construction and

Dry Dock Company, 1914

"I've got to go over to Olympia to-morrow and help put pressure on the Governor."

-Seattle housewife, 1938

FE HAVE nothing but the Earth, at last there is always a shore where the restless and disinherited must halt. When those restless and disinherited migrants landed at Plymouth Rock on the 21st of December, 1620, they faced a forested wilderness. Thereafter, in succeeding generations, the restless and disinherited might move westward. Two hundred and thirty years later, in November, 1851, a handful of migrants-twelve grown persons and twelve childrenlanded on the eastern shore of Puget Sound. The last frontier had been reached and on the shore those migrants settled what became the capital city of this frontier: Seattle, a city of migrants in a region of migrants built up on the labor of migrants. In December, 1938, Rolland Denny still lived, a man who, as a child in arms, had been among those who landed on the shore that day eighty-seven years earlier. With his native country beset with alarms and a world in crisis, this man might in memory go back to days when he had seen Indians coasting along this wilderness shore in their canoes.

Over a ridge of black fir trees the first light of morning creeps. The water is gray and still but the ripples brighten steadily. The Kirkland ferry, with a scant dozen passengers, slips noiselessly across Lake Washington toward the silent, piled-up city in the west. The roustabout leaning over the rail can see across the water to the north an indistinct moving shape with a rising column of black smoke as straight as a lead pencil. Far over the water there rises a wailing whistle and then, into the growing light, moves a tug towing a great log boom, her chains wet and black and glistening. Finally the sun clears the distant barrier of firs and bursts upon the green of the shores-mountain ash with yellow berries, madrona and monkey trees and clumps of laurel and rhododendron. Closer the ferry moves with the sun picking out in little glints and sparkles the windows of Seattle, rising up on its hills before it plunges down to the water front and Puget Sound.

Not much doing at the Smith Cove terminal; some activity at the Alaska Steamship docks where the Dorothy

Alexander is finishing her loading. Around in Salmon Bay most of the boats are deserted. A row of purse seiners, lined up in a solid rank, does not show a soul aboard. Not a sound comes from the Superior, the Republic, or the Blanco. Some life is stirring on the Tordenskjold and a man in blackdaubed dungarees hoists himself over the side with a yawn, a Stillson in his hand. The sunshine glitters now and the sky is intensely blue, with gleaming piled-up white clouds. An old green schooner, a Bering Sea fisherman with three masts, awakes. Someone below is singing "Bei mir bist du schön." On the dock the clutter of laid-up dories and marine gear has been shoved aside to clear space to spread out a newly tarred seine. A bald-headed old Swede with a white fringe around his ears is bent over the net, a steel shuttle in his hand. Only occasionally he makes a surly grunt to mark a period in the remarks of his helper who sits on an iron dolly, unstringing a bundle of cork floats.

Up on Interlaken Boulevard a Swedish maid is getting breakfast at the Dillards'. Mr. Dillard has a job in the Boeing airplane plant; his wife is secretary to a surgeon down in the Medical Arts Building. Mrs. Dillard, who was a Kappa at Northwestern, grew up on a cattle ranch near Lame Deer, Montana. Mr. Dillard, a graduate of M.I.T., came from Kansas City where his father was once purchasing agent for the Katy. Both are migrants to this region, like their neighbors. Their maid, the daughter of a Swedish immigrant, was actually born in the State of Washington.

The Dillards pay thirty dollars a month for a house perched on the edge of a bluff and overhung with trees. Their maid cooks with electricity from the City Light; as they eat their breakfast they can look down on the shining hulls of the Seattle Yacht Club in the basin at the foot of the bluff. The Dillards don't belong to the Yacht Club, but they have a sloop all their own. It took Mr. Dillard a year and a half to build it, it cost a hundred and twenty-five dollars, and Mr. Dillard learned how to splice steel rope in the process.

The Dillards read *Time* and subscribe to the *New Dealer*, the Washington Commonwealth Federation newspaper. At night their sitting room resounds with political argument; they are products of the "American system" but are filled with doubts. On the one hand, the Dillards think that Roosevelt doesn't move anywhere near fast enough, but, on the other, they feel somewhat embarrassed when an exhorter speaks of the "local capitalist press." Their neighbor on the left was bowled over by Technocracy and has not yet recovered. Their neighbor on the right listens every Sunday to the Reverend Mark A. Matthews at the First Presbyterian and feels that a strong line has simply got to be taken with these people who are on relief and with these insufferable unions who tie up the waterfront every time your back is turned.

Friday morning wears on. The row of houseboats along Lake Union is alive with racker and bustle. Two women with washed-out, stringy permanent waves lean over the railings of adjoining houseboats, quarreling. An old man, engaged in painting a flower box, shoots a stream of tobacco juice over the side and waves his brush in the direction of the disturbance. "Two of the meanest west of the Cascade Mountains," he says. "One of 'em was over to Bremerton yesterday and come back with a bottle. Last night they was thick as thieves and killed it. Now they don't love each other so much."

Uptown, outside the phony Gothic tan terra-cotta *Post-Intelligencer*, newsboys are crying the last edition. In the office of the Rainier Logging Company in the Stuart Building, a gray-haired man in gold spectacles and pepper-and-salt suit is bent over a timber plat outspread on a drafting table. The orchestra of the Olympic Hotel is shut up in the empty Olympic Bowl room for rehearsal.

Forty miles away a rattletrap bus careens along a busted macadam road. On one of the torn oilcloth seats is a young logger, his new \$15 long-shanked calk boots on the floor beside him. His upper and lower teeth in front are missing, his pompadour is down in his eyes, and he is feeling good. Alternately he sings "I've locked my heart and thrown away the key" or leans over talking about Dreamland Park to his partner in the seat ahead. The young bus driver, a cigarette dangling from one corner of his mouth, occasionally looks back at the two with stony contempt. Just as the sun is gone the bus turns in through the scattered firs and halts.

Out from these rows of yellow cottages, the yellow commissary, the yellow cookhouse, and from the operations far up in the woods, streams the lifeblood that—along with the water front—keeps Seattle alive. On the tracks beside the commissary is a string of skeletons loaded with huge fir logs; in the morning they will be on their way down to South Bay to be towed to the Everett mills.

Night has come swiftly; already the stars are out and the air almost frosty. The door of the boiler is ajar in the washhouse and the soft-coal fire flickers a dull red, throwing shadows on the floor. One of the showers is leaking and the night air is so clear that a steady drip, drip, drip can be heard a hundred feet away.

It is the whistle that rouses the place in the morning. A silent group are waiting on the cookhouse porch and, by twos and threes, others make their way through the mist. The instant the doors are open, the men pile in and silently fall to. Two blond waitresses, lipstick already applied, bring the grub. Not a word is uttered. The breakfast consists of grapefruit, sausage, fried eggs, huge strips of bacon, toast, preserves, hot cakes and syrup, and coffee.

This breakfast is a memorial. Once upon a time, before the Wobblies harried this forest country, there might have been wormy oatmeal, canned milk, johnnycake, along with the warmed-overs from the night before. "Work and pray, live on hay." Not any more. Does Gaar, the wood superintendent, with his boiled red face, square jaw, straw-colored hair, and gimlet blue eyes, think about the compulsion that produced this breakfast? No, he does not. In less than five minutes he has finished and rises, a hulking giant in dungaree pants, copper-riveted at the pockets, and heavy blue woolen shirt. To one of his galluses is pinned a nickel-plated star-incircle lettered "Forest Ranger—State of Washington." He snatches up his grease-spotted Panama and bolts for the tracks where the gasoline speeder waits.

In the dispatcher's office, beside the tracks, is old Nelson, a green shade slanted over his eyes. He leans over a tattered logging railroad map, the telephone receiver propped to his ear, one hand holding a colored pin poised over the map. "All clear?" he bellows and a moment later hangs up the receiver and fixes the pin to the map.

The driver of the speeder starts the gas engine, a boy from the commissary slings the mailbags over the side, and Superintendent Gaar climbs aboard. The road ahead of the speeder is clear. A boy of eighteen, about to be broken in as a whistle punk, sits in one corner making himself as invisible as possible. Two young loggers, just back from the union convention in Tacoma and anxious to show their vigor, talk loudly and with great emphasis directly across from the Old Man. There is some reason for this urge to spread themselves. It was not so long ago that the National Guard was out to break the lumber strike and only a mile away a couple of picketers had been picked up by state troopers. They had been forced to run a couple of miles and, when they fell down, were beaten till they stumbled to their feet again. But old Gaar pays the two red hats no mind. He wants a cigarette badly but will not have it until he is safely out of sight of this crowd, for tobacco is forbidden in the woods. He sits silent with his hat pulled over his eyes, brooding about a butterfly hook that must be replaced and sore about the sarcastic letter he got from the general manager the night before.

The speeder putts along, pausing by the phone box at every switch to call back the dispatcher. On every hand the ravines and hillsides are an endless prospect of old stumps. The grass, sparkling with dew in the morning light, has grown up between them and now softens the ravages of devastation. It took those trees perhaps three hundred and fifty years to grow and it will be a long time before they grow again. If you want, you may try to farm this land—ten dollars an acre, ten years to pay at six per cent—but you had better not try it.

Across a burnt-over ravine that pitches down into a gorge with a torrent, is Camp 4 hugging the hillside beside a switchback. The speeder does not cross the ravine but, dodging a

trestle, keeps on and at last draws up in front of a puffing log train. Beside the track, on its creosoted piling, rears the skidder. Far off across the valley a giant fir, the tail spar, stripped of its top and all its branches, stands alone, guyed with cables and with a huge block at its crown. From this great spar, suspended across the valley to another spar beside the track, runs a cable and across it is traveling a skidder carriage from which are suspended four huge forty-foot logs. The carriage reaches the track side of the ravine, there is a roar of the cable drum, a piercing whistle, the logs rise high in air, another whistle, the tong shakers and hook tenders jump, and with a bo-o-om the logs fall to earth.

Away across the valley two fallers are at work on a tree. The noise of the distant falling logs cannot be heard here. The forest swallows up sound, it is all still. Here and there a tree, brought down by the wind long ago, is covered with moss and fern. Sometimes a clump of Indian pipes is found growing beside such logs. One of the fallers can see deer tracks, not many days old, in the wet earth.

The fallers, bending over the crosscut, do not often speak, but presently Ole pauses and says to Emile, his partner:

"Goin' down tonight?"

Emile nods without saying a word.

"There's a new place opened on the Skidroad." He gestures to indicate a pair of opulent hips. Emile looks at him, considers, and nods again. The sawing recommences. From time to time they stop to shift the springboards and then the moment comes. They jump clear. Ole turns and bellows "Timber!" and again "Timber!" Slowly at first, with a rustle and a whisper, the tree starts to fall; faster then and faster with a terrible rushing sound; then like a thunderbolt

it strikes, filling the forest with the roar that is almost instantly smothered into silence again.

But young Regan, backing away from another tree, has not heard in time; a branch of the falling tree catches him and in an instant he is down. Ten minutes later the speeder, summoned by excited calls and whistles, has moved around the edge of the ravine. The two fallers make their way up the slope bearing the unconscious logger and put him on the speeder floor. There is blood flowing from his mouth, his flannel shirt is in shreds and his chest is stove in. Someone at the switch has called for clearance and now the speeder starts on its way down the mountainside. Tonight is Saturday night but Regan will not get to Seattle nor the Skidroad tonight nor maybe any night. Far up the track from other fallers comes the same call repeated, but fainter now and almost out of hearing: "Timber!"

Now as Saturday evening in Seattle draws on, Yesler Way, the Skidroad, lights up. It is called the Skidroad still because long ago oxen skidded the logs cut at the top of the hill down to Yesler's mill at the water's edge until the logs were gone and in time the road became a street. As the lights blink on, all the nest of streets and alleys near the waterfront and the Skidroad take on a strange shimmer.

In Pioneer Square the grimy green totem pole with its red, yellow, and black faces rises up, a monument to a gold rush and the last frontier. This is a place filled with the ghosts of beliefs and traditions of get-rich-quick. Cluttered about the railings and the dingy iron canopy of the underground toilet in the square are the burns, the castaways, and the battered hulks of those who once embraced those beliefs and traditions and dreams—Get On in the World—

and believe them still. Where Henry Villard's Chinese coolies peddled wild duck and brant caught in their water traps, where Siwash Indians sold venison, where Alaskan sourdoughs, in fur parkas that stunk with a year's living, flung gold dust about, now old men in smashed-in derbies vend razor blades and the bars fill up with gobs from the Pacific fleet anchored in the harbor.

The loggers' employment agencies, the "slave markets," are mostly empty these days, for many camps are shut down. Some loggers may be found a few blocks away in the Hooverville beside the Connecticut Street Dock, a pestilent huddle of shacks whose inhabitants skirmish for food like alley cats.

If you are flush and have two bits you can stay at the Mount Fuji Hotel or around the corner at the Richelieu or at any one of a dozen disheveled brick and stone hotels, once magnificent in the Klondike age. If you choose to go out to the Professor's house on the other side of town, with its white modern living room and Bauhaus furniture, you may have the Skidroad described for you while a Chinese boy in a starched white jacket brings you coffee in an exquisite eggshell cup. This luxury does not come from a University of Washington salary; it is sustained by private income.

Both street and sidewalks and curbstones in front of the Richelieu and for a block beyond are crowded with men; it is difficult for traffic to get through. The place is littered with matches, butts, tinfoil, bottle caps, and fragments of newspaper.

A leathery-looking Finn in high black shoes, rusty blue suit, neck shave and frayed four-in-hand tie is staring va-

cantly at a middle-aged and grease-stained Irishman who squats before him on the pavement. Neither pays any attention to the Filipino children shooting craps beside them nor to the huge blond Salvation Army woman preaching in Swedish across the street.

"Here's the way it is," says the Irishman. "Hitler wants to go east. He's got his army ready. He's goin' to use that army."

The Finn's look is perplexed and numb.

"I dunno," he says.

"Well, Jesus Christ," says the Irishman, "when you make hot cakes in the morning and you got 'em ready, you're goin' to use 'em, ain't you?"

Up the block, at intervals, are little groups gathered about street speakers perched on high stepladders. The din of the Salvation Army band playing "Rock of Ages" cannot drown the exhortations of an old, white-haired blind man calling upon Robert Ingersoll to prove that the resurrection and the life everlasting are frauds and lies. A cowpuncher in flannel shirt and Stetson, strayed here from God knows where, comes out of the lady barber's and moves along from one street meeting to another. Near the atheist a syndicalist spieler is at work and, farther down, from another stepladder, a lad in peg-top black corduroy pants and a windbreaker is reading a picketing notice to the men around him. The crowd shuffles and mills about; the smoke from a thousand Bull Durham cigarettes eddies up in the evening air.

The bulbs glow under the wide awning of the sidewalk bookstore. The racks are filled with radical newspapers from all over the world, mixed up with mining journals, farm papers, Alaska Weekly, Svenska Posten, Pacific Tribunen, and scores of cheap editions of Darwin, Upton Sinclair, Nietzsche, Jack London, and Walt Whitman. Through the streets hereabouts drift men of every race and color and speech, from every port in the world. The argument among these carriers of ideas is incessant.

Presently a light rain begins to fall. The Salvation Army garners no more souls but beats it for shelter. Over on the square two gobs, ashore from the Saratoga, dig up the change needed for the Palm Burlesque. A boy in a black-and-white checkerboard lumberjack shirt is looking up—at "Men's Doctor—Doctor Evans—Consultation Free—Free Museum for Men Upstairs."

Some near-by streets are dark. It's no use looking for Sol Rubin, the raw fur buyer, nor Roy Landsturm either. They're eating dinner somewhere. Painless Parker is pulling no teeth at this hour. If you want sextants, compasses, box shooks, chippewa leather boots, aster plants, geranium cuttings, wire splicing, turnbuckles, azimuth tables, marine engines, Disston saws, Alaska mosquito nets—a bargain at forty-nine cents—or *Brown's Rule of the Road Manual*, these things must wait until Monday morning. The last of a cargo of logs is being swung aboard the S.S. Cinnabar; her decks blaze with light, the winch groans as the great water-soaked timbers rise slowly from the waterside.

The wind is rising; its getting colder. The crowd inside the Nordic Coffee House increases. The watchmen at the Boeing airplane plant make their rounds, the bunkhouse far away at Camp 5 is almost empty, and miles north, riding the dark greasy swells past Flattery and the lightship, comes the Hikawa Maru of the Nippon Yusen Kaisha bound east for Puget Sound and Seattle.

2

The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court wrote to the Philadelphia banker: "I should like to be in the Board of Directors, as to which I suppose there will be no difficulty, and am half tempted to offer myself as a candidate for the Presidency [of the road]. I think I would make a good President and my antecedents and reputation would justify a good salary." In December, 1869, four months after he received Mr. Chase's letter, Jay Cooke undertook to finance the Northern Pacific Railway.

Only a short while before, on May 1st, the Union Pacific and the Central Pacific had met at Promontory Point; trains were running and the frontier town of Omaha was booming. If such spectacular results were attainable on the plains, what might not be accomplished in the Pacific Northwest? In the twenty years since the gold rush of '49, California had become rich; settlers were trickling into the villages in Oregon around the lower reaches of the Columbia and were now pushing north toward Puget Sound and Washington Territory.

Aside from the coast, little was known about the West. The Oregon country had been the place where Meriwether Lewis and William Clark had gone, the site of an unsuccessful speculation of John Jacob Astor, the far-off region involved in "54-40 or Fight." Mr. Cooke sent an agent to spy out the land, a man previously engaged in selling Beecher's Life of Christ by subscription. At the very mo-

ment that the country was celebrating the completion of the Union Pacific, this book agent was sending back word from Puget Sound: "What can't be got out of the soil which sustains a growth of sawing firs and cedars 200 feet high? . . . Salmon are not caught here, they are pitchforked out of the streams. Jay, we have got the biggest thing on earth. Our enterprise is an inexhaustible gold mine."

The North Pacific had been chartered on the 2d of July, 1864, but little was done until Cooke was persuaded to promote the enterprise. He at once moved to secure political control of the Northwest. He soon had "a tolerably firm political grasp of the State Governments of Minnesota and Wisconsin. . . . In Montana he had Governor Potts and in Washington Territory Delegate Garfield almost as securely as though they daily served him under his eyes in the banking house in Third Street, whence everything had its source."

Actually what led Cooke into this enterprise was less a railroad than a land speculation. When he undertook to finance the Northern Pacific he made this stipulation:

A company shall be organized for the purpose of purchasing lands, improvement of town sites, or other purposes, and the same shall be divided in the same proportion; that is, the original interests shall have one half, and Jay Cooke shall have one half. What had happened was that Cooke was already involved in a land speculation in and about the wilderness outpost of Duluth, a site near which embittered Southern slaveholders had once thought to establish a summer resort where they could bring their slaves and not have to endure the gibes of Saratoga. Europe was now sown with the familiar railroad literature and on the 30th of May, 1870, a resolution

was put through Congress and signed by Grant which widened the land grant belt to a hundred and twenty miles—sixty miles on either side of the right of way—and added an additional belt west of the Rockies so that the road might branch in two lines, one to go down the Columbia River to Portland and the other straight across Washington Territory and the Cascade Mountains to Puget Sound.

The prime point of interest was the land grant, the largest ever made, which eventually totaled 47,000,000 acres, a tract larger than the whole of New England. Through the long and troubled course of the railway's history this grant remained; the domination of the Northwest, the exploitation of its timber and mineral resources, the control of government itself were influenced by, and all but based upon, this great domain. Absentee landlords might die or be ousted by rivals, but the absenteeship endured. Year after year the Northern Pacific has laid claim to millions of acres of timberland, contending that the Federal government has never fulfilled the terms of its contract. In 1924 the Secretary of Agriculture wrote: "The total gross receipts from the sale of the lands from its grant amounted to \$136,118,533.14. The cost of constructing the road did not exceed \$70,000,-000. The sale of the lands has more than paid the cost of constructing the railroad." But the claim does not rest; as this is written, the United States Supreme Court is soon to hear the latest appeal of the Northern Pacific, more than half a century since the day the road was completed.

Despite the most strenuous efforts, Cooke's bonds would not sell. Eight years of expansion since the close of the war had ended in insane speculation; the Credit Mobilier scandals had roused the country. Cooke had let the best people in on the ground floor; generals, senators, and the President himself regarded the great banker with admiration and awe. But in spite of his genius and his godliness—"We must," he said, "all get down at the feet of Jesus and be taught by no one but Himself"—he was overwhelmed. On the 18th of September, 1873, Cooke's banking house failed, precipitating the worst panic that the country had ever seen. Its labor unpaid, its contracts defaulted, with piles of abandoned ties and rusty rails, the Northern Pacific was deserted at Bismarck, North Dakota. The lonely inhabitants of that desolate prairie were left with a new scale of measurement: "Go back three sidings and a water tank."

At this moment Henry Villard was in Germany recovering from a nervous breakdown. This man, an immigrant to the United States from Germany during the revolution of '48, had by turns reported the Lincoln-Douglas debates for a New York newspaper, written a book about Pike's Peak and the West, and married the daughter of William Lloyd Garrison. At the time of his breakdown he was secretary of the American Social Science Association in Boston, a job which "gave him an opportunity to study public and corporate financing, including railways and banks." Now, while recuperating abroad, he persuaded the German stockholders of the Oregon and California Railroad to appoint him as their agent. Returning to the United States he went to the Northwest and, in the act of discharging his commission, providently got control of the Oregon Steam Navigation Company which held a transport monopoly on the Columbia River. He built a railway up the riverbank and proposed to the officials of the Northern Pacific, then in slow resuscitation in Dakota, that his road become their Pacific outlet.

They refused. A genius as a promoter, Villard returned to New York and by means of the famous Blind Pool—speculators were invited to invest with Villard in a scheme unspecified!—he raised eight million dollars and bought control of the Northern Pacific. Then, with frantic haste, construction was pushed, and in 1883 the western line met the eastern at Gold Creek, Montana. A special train, decked with evergreen garlands, brought Villard with a supporting cast of New York and German bankers for the Montana ceremonies and an Indian war dance. The job was done and Villard was broke. Six months later his holding company failed and the promoter was on his way back to Germany with another nervous breakdown.

3

When those twenty-four men, women, and children settled Seattle in November, 1851, they found themselves on the shore of a great inland sea. Spanish explorers had been there, and later New England sea captains had explored Puget Sound, but few others. It was a great silent wilderness, inhabited by some scattered Indian tribes and a few trappers. If it had been possible to stand on the highest point of the Cascades and survey the entire region, one could have seen the broad waters of the sound with its innumerable bays and inlets; across the water, a peninsula with forested mountains and in particular, one white glittering peak; to the south, still another mountain, snowy also. Back from the yellow bluffs and narrow pebbly beaches rose the forests of spruce and cedar and larch and hemlock and, of course, the firs.

It was all a lush and marvelous green. Sheltered by the Cascades, this narrow shelf of coast was given the benefit of warm winds and heavy rainfall; it was one of the most fertile regions in the world, a paradise where all things grew, the most generous frontier ever set before man. To the east stretched the plateau of central Washington, scored by the Columbia, flowing down through its gorges from Canada, past the arid basin of the Grand Coulee, left millions of years ago by the retreating ice sheet. Toward what was later the Idaho border the country rose again in the endless pine-covered mountains behind the wilderness settlement at Spokane Falls. Across this vast region would presently be built the single track of the Northern Pacific Railway, but now for the handful of settlers in their log houses there was no connection with anything.

Before a month was gone a brig from California, coasting along the lonely shore, caught sight of the cabins and anchored. Could the settlers sell the captain some piling to build wharves in San Francisco, then in the throes of its gold rush boom? In three weeks the men had filled the vessel's hold with timber. The brig sailed away and presently returned with pork, flour, sugar, tools, and a kitchen stove. Shortly after this one Henry Yesler, an Oregon immigrant, came looking for a site for a sawmill. He was given one on the shore and there the sawmill was set up. From the townsite on the shore, the ground rose abruptly until it reached a series of ridges from which it descended again to a broad sheet of fresh water, which the settlers called Lake Washington. Between this lake and the sound was still another lake, so that the town was all but surrounded by water. It was simple to set to work felling trees to clear building lots

and let the oxen drag the logs down the hill to the Yesler mill.

It was not long before the promoters in Frisco heard about this region. The demand for lumber in California was constant; it was simple to bring it down the coast in a sailing vessel. So by 1854 the Messrs. Pope and Talbot, two Frisco plungers, and a number of other speculators had appeared in the Puget Sound region. They bought great tracts of timber along the sound shore for a dollar and a quarter an acre and set up their mills.

In Seattle the Yesler sawmill became the center of village life; the cook and mess house were used as a town hall and courthouse. There the sociables were held and swaps made with the Indians. There the settlers got news of what was doing in those Frisco-promoted mills. It was possible for them to do logging and sell timber to these mills. As the settlement grew and rude streets were laid out among the stumps, other settlers were venturing out, building cabins in the coves and making wood roads back into the forest. If the logs they sold to those Frisco mills came from the public land, what of it? The promoters preferred to hold on to their own timber anyway and buy and saw the stolen logs. No settler would complain. There was a wilderness of timber; a farmer could with difficulty clear an acre in a year. Let it go. The Federal government at Washington was more distant than the East Indies. Between Seattle and the East, now on the verge of the Civil War, lay desert and mountains and the plains. So, before ever the West was opened to the homesteader, before the great waves of immigration began, while the cutting of pine in Michigan had barely started, already the gnawing away of the Pacific Northwest forests

was under way. Beavers gnawing their way inland from the water's edge!

So there arose not far from Seattle a series of log-house company towns. At Port Gamble and Port Ludlow and Port Madison and Port Blakely the scream of the saws attracted the Indians and they, too, were set to work in the mills and housed in corporation villages. Full-blown, the absentee corporation with its familiar features appeared in the forests primeval; and by the time Jay Cooke's failure rocked the country, these early Frisco lumber companies, the forerunners of Wall Street, interlocked and were controlled as one with mills, villages, and little fleets to carry the lumber away.

Since it was almost a womanless region, an adventurer from Frisco named John Pennell built a whorehouse in 1861, hard by Mr. Yesler's mill, and stocked it with suitable washed and combed Indian girls. There were several hundred persons living in Seattle then, but logging was impossible during the winter rains, the fishing season was over by autumn, and one could not farm. But one could go to the village and pass the time of day around Yesler's and the evening at Pennell's. This so disturbed one Asa Mercer, subsequently president of the State University, that he twice rounded the Horn bringing out from New England and the East untarnished females needed for marriage.

The one topic most debated was communication with the East, a railroad. The Frisco lumbermen were not so interested. A magazine correspondent in '82 was asked by millowners not to publish any statistics since the lumbermen "didn't want people outside the Sound Region to know anything about what they possessed or had done." Immigra-

tion was not desired; let them be alone in their silent fastness to pursue their own profitable devices. But the Seattle settlers felt otherwise, and though they had to do without a railroad for a generation and had to see the village of Tacoma eventually made the terminus of the Northern Pacific, they never ceased their railway agitation. While they argued, there was going on in the East the slow gathering of the forces that eventually would control both the town and the region.

4

As the Gilded Age opened at the close of the Civil War there assembled at Washington the representatives of those who now were ready to possess the earth. Some were busy with wool and iron tariffs, others were set for the exploitation of the West. First there were the railroad men, who for a generation controlled what was west of the Mississippi. Around them were grouped the cattlemen, the mining men, and the lumbermen, and-years later-the utility men. Many were promoters in their own right, others were friends and dependents of promoters. While the covered wagons were streaming west and the homesteaders were breaking the sod on what seemed a limitless prairie, the knowing ones were already snatching the prizes in the public domain for themselves. This snatching was reflected in Wall Street and in Philadelphia and Boston. By 1863 Oregon Steam Navigation had been listed on the New York Stock Exchange.

It was some years before the homesteaders discovered that great as the public domain might be, it was finite after all, and that the great titleholders were ahead of them. Those titleholders did not sleep. The stray visitor from the West

who saw the Washington mansions of the railroad senators, the mining legislators, and the saw-log statesmen, and heard about the poker games in the Willard was generally moved to admiration and only wished that he could do as well. Philetus Sawyer, the lumberman senator from Wisconsin, was there and after him John C. Spooner, the railroad lawyer. Henry C. Payne, Villard's partner in Milwaukee streetcars, who was famed far and wide as a strikebreaker, was one of them and, as Postmaster General, dealt out pie to the deserving. These men-and others like them-were the ones most interested in the parceling out of the West and they felt that the Department of the Interior belonged to them. Often they moved from the Senate into the Interior and back again. Henry M. Teller was thought to have got the title to his mining claims when he was Secretary of the Interior. "I don't believe," he said later on, "there is either a moral or any other claim upon me to postpone the use of what nature has given me, so that the next generation or generations yet unborn may have an opportunity to get what I myself ought to get."

That was precisely the way the lumbermen felt. Into those slow-going offices at Washington with their reels of red tape, the complaining homesteader seldom penetrated. The railroad fare alone to Washington cost a small fortune. It was different with the timbermen. Not only were department heads compliant, and frequently in the business themselves, but underlings could be bribed and were. When occasionally an honest commissioner of the Public Land Office attempted to clean things up, his efforts were frustrated and special agents who talked about frauds got sacked for their pains.

Meditating upon white pine, the saw-log statesmen argued their case on a high moral note. In the Senate they wept over the plight of the settler and the prospector, leading a hard and precarious life at the edge of the frontier. Was this man, the outrider of civilization, to be denied timber from the public domain with which to build himself shelter? It was unthinkable. In 1878 there was passed the Timber and Stone Act which granted a hundred and sixty acres of timber to any person or association at a minimum of two and a half an acre. By the middle eighties it was known that three-quarters of the entries under the act were fraudulent. But this was too slow for the promoters of the Comstock Lode. They carried off some ten million dollars' worth of timber for use in the mines without wasting time on bribery or fraudulent entries.

While the village of Seattle grew at a snail's pace beside the sound, the exploitation of the timber in the Lake States and around the headwaters of the Mississippi was proceeding at headlong speed. The day would come when those lumbermen would be ready to move on the Pacific Northwest. Chief among them was the man who came to be known as the "greatest lumberman in all the world," Frederick Weyerhaeuser.

5

Frederick Weyerhaeuser, the German immigrant who eventually became the greatest landlord in the State of Washington, was twenty-two years old when, in 1856, he went to work in a sawmill at Rock Island, Illinois. His coming coincided with the beginning of a great lumber

boom. At the moment when the Pope and Talbot mills on Puget Sound had started operations, lumber towns were being built in Michigan overnight and in Wisconsin the great white pine stand in the valley of the Chippewa was opened. This boom, accelerated by the Civil War and the opening of the Middle West, produced the first crop of saw-log statesmen and their business partners. Legislators were bought, the public land gutted without mercy; and down the river to the lumber towns—Burlington, Muscatine, Davenport, Rock Island, Clinton, Galena, Dubuque, Bad Axe, and La Crosse—floated the great log rafts, the marvelous pine, making a broad brown carpet that bore fortunes to the lumbermen.

During the height of the rafting season, there were close to twenty thousand men, including the Canucks, who had followed the lumbermen out from New England. Through the long winters the men were immured in the North, subsisting on johnnycake and salt meat, sheltered in verminous bunkhouses. With the breakup of spring they were turned loose on the rafts to go roaring down the river and burn up their winter's earnings in a week's riotous living.

Out of this crowd of wild men arose the myth—invented by the Canucks—of Paul Bunyan, a man who lived in a cookhouse as big as a mountain, who dug the Great Lakes, whose prowess as a stallion moved strong men to tears. This godlike being could fell bigger trees faster, swing an ax better, shoot a rapid with greater skill—and work longer—than any man. In proportion, other loggers surpassed all other Americans in physical prowess.

These traits did not pass the notice of the lumbermen who employed them. If a frontiersman's vanity could be tickled

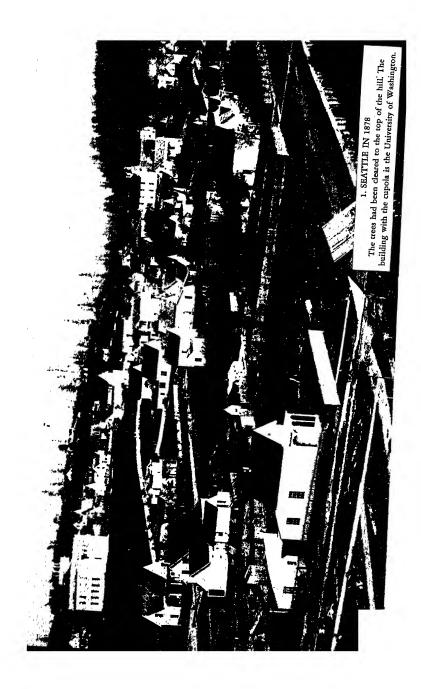
by such childish means, the heavier would be the clinking of the cashbox and in years to come lumbermen would recall with longing the days when loggers were satisfied with "a box of snuff and a bottle."

Most of these lumbermen were New Englanders. New England lumbermen were first in Michigan, first west of Superior, they were early in the South, and they eventually controlled Washington, though the forests were a barren wilderness ruin when they departed. A gallery of eminent American lumbermen would repeat the portrait over and over again: the short white beard, the broadcloth coat, the gold cable watch-chain, the square-toed boots, and, clutched in the right hand, a check for the treasurer of the Republican Campaign Committee.

Into this company of worthies came the "molelike" Weyerhaeuser who, in 1858, had taken over the sawmill of his busted employer. He worked from seven in the morning until ten at night, he read his German Bible, he never caroused or spent his gains on display. On the 28th of December, 1870, there was a meeting of most of the Mississippi sawmill men at the old Briggs House in Chicago, to determine what they were going to do about their log supply. Until then it had been the custom to pick out of the river what was needed and then have a general totting up when the season was over. Each millman tried to cut the throats of the others in this totting up and the log wastage was enormous. This, Weyerhaeuser could not endure. The result of the meeting was the organization of the Mississippi River Boom and Logging Company which took over all the operations from the Northern pineries to the door of the mill and all the millmen became partners in this huge "cooperative monopoly." Within two years Weyerhaeuser was the president of this monopoly. Outside of a few in the lumber business no one knew him.

He began to make little trips into the northern pine country, buying timber. Generally he went alone, his squat figure huddled beneath a horse blanket as he drove along in a cutter through the wood roads in the snow or tramped afoot through the forest. He couldn't buy all that he wanted by himself, so he took in partners. He had so many partners in so many different deals that eventually almost nobody knew how many mills, booming companies, timber corporations, logging railroads, and steamboat outfits there were in which Weyerhaeuser was the dominant partner with "a twenty per cent interest." He moved silently and almost without trace and "did not feel that the public generally had, or ought to have, any particular interest in him as an individual."

At last in 1891, as the prosperity of the Mississippi mill towns passed their meridian, it was time to move. The brick house with the veranda at Rock Island was abandoned and Weyerhaeuser moved to St. Paul and went to live next door to Jim Hill on Summit Avenue. The two great exploiters of the Northwest now were side by side. Only one jump more remained—to reach the Pacific. In February, 1890, the various Hill railroads had been combined as the Great Northern and it was presently known that Hill was going through to the coast. It was meet and suitable that as he went Frederick Weyerhaeuser should go too, not only as a lumberman but, presently, as a director of Mr. Hill's road. When, in the panic of '93, the Northern Pacific went to the wall for the third time and Mr. Hill reached





2. SEATTLE AFTER A SNOWFALL IN 1880

out to get it, one-half of the great pattern of the Pacific Northwest was complete. There was the great land grant, there were two great railways, with Mr. Weyerhaeuser and Mr. Hill to tie them together.

6

Through these years Seattle village had been slowly growing. True, it was still nowhere, you could not buy a ticket in the East to get there. The only rail connection was by an occasional mixed train over a stub line to the Northern Pacific at Tacoma. It grew nevertheless and by 1884 there were five thousand persons in the place. Some of the sternwheelers that plied on the sound were put together in the village shipyard. In 1885 a little electric light plant was started and Sidney Z. Mitchell, who had come out from Alabama, got a job in it as electrician. There was a newspaper, the Post-Intelligencer, and Hammond Lamont, the son of an upstate New York Methodist preacher and elder brother of a future partner of J. P. Morgan, went to work for it as a reporter. Back from the tide flats and Yesler's mill grew the huddle of frame and brick blocks and the falsefront stores; farther up the hill were the first timid mansard frame dwellings of the promoters who through land speculation and lumbering and shipbuilding and wholesaling were getting a hold upon the tiny metropolis. Some of the ladies who presided over those mansards had come to the altar via the whorehouses near Mr. Yesler's mill and there were heartburnings and hard words between them and the virtuous dames who traced their descent from Mr. Mercer's voyages around the Horn.

But there were other differences between this town and other frontier towns. True enough, all comers in one way or another wanted to get on in the world. For instance, there was Manson Backus, who had run a small bank in Union Springs, New York. Finding Seattle a promising place, he brought his family out in '89, over the stub line from Tacoma, and started another bank. This was in the tradition. But when the man who grazes his cow in the stump-filled vacant lot up the road is a Populist who got his bellyful of Nebraska and never stops talking about it, when the German baker reads Marx and never stops talking about it, and when a civil engineer in '88 spends his time trying to tie the miniature labor unions in the town into a council and all these people are neighbors, what is to be done? As it was, the malcontents in town started a People's party in '86 and beat the businessmen by forty-one votes in electing a mayor. In the construction of the Northern Pacific, Villard had imported thousands of "docile and cheap" Chinese coolies. With the completion of the road in '83 the coolies were left stranded along the coast and would work at anything for any price. This pulled the bottom out of wages, and that and the arguments in the bars of the water front towns was enough to start killing. There wasn't any in Seattle because the civil engineer, who was against the Chinese, got entangled with Cleveland by telegraph and tried to stave off martial law; and Judge Burke, who was a promoter too and presently a hired man for Jim Hill, through threats and exhortation, persuaded the mob to disperse.

Here and there, back in the woods, were New England lumbermen, the forerunners of the great lumber migration, who had skipped the Lake States and established themselves in the Northwest. In 1872 the three Blackman brothers came out from Maine and built a sawmill at Snohomish, a few miles north of Seattle. There were others like them. Eventually a little railroad was built that threaded these mills together and made a connection with Vancouver and provided an easy way to bring the lumber down to the water's edge at Seattle.

Actually those little mill towns were mining towns; the smoke arising from the sawdust burners told all and sundry that man was passing here but once and in a hurry. The takings were deposited in Seattle banks down the line and Seattle merchants sold the mills hardware, saws, boots, blankets, sugar, flour, and grease. Down out of these camps came the money, the raw materials, that made Seattle move. Presently the mill "town" would vanish when the near by timber was cut. Thus early, in the "inexhaustible" forests, the shaky underpinnings of the region's economy were set up. This huge storehouse of raw material—the mineral, the soil, the timber, and the fish—was dedicated to boom.

Population in the region was small and there were always jobs and food was cheap and, provided one was not a farmer, one might always move on. The people of the region, said a visiting correspondent, "are strangely nomadic, a fact especially true of the unmarried . . . partly because of their feeling of independence, partly the vagabondish spirit engendered by their long and gradually progressive journey hither from Atlantic states, men are likely to forsake their employer at very short notice and go somewhere else with ill-defined purpose." Ill-defined purpose! There was always some new place to go. The footloose man did not settle down here as he had done on other frontiers; a shingle

weaver, a job printer, a logger, a bricklayer could always find another job somewhere else. What the iching foot did not accomplish, the region did. Those who began as newcomers in a wilderness country turned into migrants because, for most of them, their jobs were seasonal and the seasons all but coincided. Salmon fishing was good for the summer months only, logging was all over when the November rains began, the coal mines worked only by fits and starts. The traditional forms of frontier exploitation had to contend with these regional conditions and there developed widespread economy worked by migrant, unmarried labor. Upon this foundation the town of Seattle was gradually being built up and as it grew, the slow-moving momentum of the westward move of the timbermen accelerated.

In 1880—excluding the logging camps—there were but 499 individuals employed in the lumber industry in Washington Territory. Wages were good; from three to five dollars a day. Despite the fact that the Frisco lumbermen "didn't want people outside the Sound Region to know anything about what they possessed or had done," the agents of the Eastern lumbermen were already busy. In 1889 stumpage in the neighborhood of Grays Harbor was being bought for thirty cents a thousand. In the same year Chauncey Griggs, Jim Hill's old partner in the coal business in St. Paul, came out and helped to organize the huge St. Paul and Tacoma Lumber Company. The number of those employed in lumbering in Washington spurted up to ten thousand in that year.

On the 22d of February, 1889, Congress passed the enabling act to admit Washington to the Union. A few weeks later, on the 6th of June, the frame-built town caught fire

and within a few hours Yesler's sawmill and pier, the false fronts and the business blocks, the sawdust piles and the shanties were burned to the ground. Barely were the ashes cold when the plans for rebuilding in stone and iron were being drawn. The frontier age was over; the corporation era, which had put its wilderness outposts in the Pope and Talbot company towns and which already had an enormous stake in the Northern Pacific land grant, was now to be formally installed. All the familiar signs were visible. Coincident with the fire, a strike of shingle weavers—an unheard-of thing—shut the Blackman mill at Snohomish. Jim Hill's Great Northern was coming through the Rockies; there was a chance that Seattle might be made the terminus. Let the place be swept and garnished for those who possessed the earth.

7

"Why," said an honorable senator from Washington in the nineties, "should we be everlasting bedeviled by these scientific gentlemen from Harvard College?" What was it that caused the saw-log statesman such agony, that caused Heitfeld of Idaho to sob piteously in the Senate over the settler deprived of his timber? In 1875 there had been founded the obscure American Forestry Association, composed of a few persons who were able to foresee where forest gutting was going to end. There were a few in government who tried to stop the plundering of the Interior Department, but they were interested in the prevention of stealing, not in forestry. The public lands were meant for homesteaders, not for a gang of thieves. The attitude of the

lumbermen was one of derision. How had lumbermen got on in the past, how was business ever done except by getting all you could? Were not lumbermen as honest as the general run? Was not Weyerhaeuser's name so good that contracts with him were unnecessary?

In 1891, while the lumbermen nodded, a few zealots got a bill through Congress which authorized the President to make forest reserves out of the public domain. In the next year, at the very time the Populists at the Omaha convention were declaring that "the public land is almost gone," Gifford Pinchot had commenced the first systematic forest work in America on the estate of George Vanderbilt in North Carolina. Pinchot was a zealot also and he was rich. When, in 1896, a National Forest Commission was appointed for the supposedly innocuous purpose of surveying the public domain, Pinchot was on it along with a number of persons of scientific reputation.

It was the summer of the Bryan campaign and the farmers were engaged in their last terrific battle with the political power of the moneyed East. The Northwest had been almost prostrated by the panic of '93, the Northern Pacific had collapsed and Hill was after it. A wave of Populist fervor swept Washington and the huckstering of the great land grant and the railroad control of politics was bitterly denounced. As the Commission moved along through the West their ears were deafened by the clamor, and the Populist papers furnished more food for thought. There must be an end, said the Spokane Spokesman-Review, of the "shameful and wholesale control of legislation, corporate influences, and the frittering away of the public domain."

The lumbermen sighed with relief when Mark Hanna

smashed the "wretched, addle-pated boy" from Nebraska, but in their hour of triumph they were thunderstruck by a blow from a totally unexpected quarter. That Commission had reported; and using the authority granted in 1891, Cleveland the steadfast, the defender of hard money and conservatism, had done them dirt. In February, 1897, in the last days of his administration, he proclaimed thirteen forest reserves of 21,000,000 acres.

The rage of the lumber and railroad men knew no bounds. In a passion of indignation, the Seattle Chamber of Commerce hurried off a memorial to the Federal Government. "The reservations, of no benefit to any legitimate object or policy, are of incalculable damage to the present inhabitants of this state. If they are allowed to stand, not only will the mining industry be destroyed, but the great railroad trunk lines of the Central West which are now heading for Puget Sound will be prevented from coming here. All the passes in the Cascade mountains by which the railroads can reach the Sound are embraced in these reservations."

What was to be done? If the President's proclamation could not be upset, at least it could be delayed. Give the boys a few precious hours to get what they could. In the Senate an amendment was hitched to a money bill which provided that "in cases in which a tract covered by an unperfected bona fide claim or by a patent is included within the limits of a public forest reserve, the settler or owner thereof, may, if he desires to do so, relinquish the tract to the government, and in lieu thereof select a tract of vacant land open to settlement, not exceeding in area the tract covered by the claim or patent, and no charge shall be made in these cases

for the making of entry of record or issuing the patent to cover the tract selected."

This was the famous Lieu Selection Act, upon its face designed to offer consolation to the poor homesteader—in the Northwest the poor homesteader occupied the place held in the East by the widow and orphan—whose land had been included in the tracts withdrawn by the government.

"I recollect very well," said Senator Wilson of Washington with great bitterness, "a few years ago a special agent of the General Land Office came to our town who said he was going over to investigate some timber land depredations on Badger Mountain. I said to him: 'When you get over there you will find a very beautiful valley of 300,000 acres of land and you can see that every farm house and all the buildings there are built from timber taken from Badger Mountain and if you think you can get a verdict you had better try it.' He did try it, but he did not succeed."

It was not certain just what part the railroad legislators had had in framing this bill, but it was plain enough that the Northern Pacific was the chief gainer. From the great drawers in the railroad offices the land agents might take the maps of that imperial grant and, carefully noting the barren wastes included in it, be off to Washington to exchange those wastes for timber.

One final touch remained. Senator Wilson, beloved as a saw-log artist, introduced a bill designed to carve out of the Pacific Forest Reserve, hard by Seattle, the Mount Rainier National Park. The Northern Pacific was permitted to relinquish any of its lands in the park or the reserve and take, surveyed or unsurveyed, land in any State into which its lines extended. McKinley signed the bill immediately and within

three days the Northern Pacific agents had handed over the plats for 450,000 acres. Those rocky slopes and the white glittering summit, so beautiful to the eye and so inspiring to the poet but so useless as collateral, had been swapped for square miles of timber that had taken hundreds of years to ripen for the saw.

The Lieu Selection Act was passed on June 4, 1897. Senator Wilson's little Park Bill came shortly after, but these jockeyings for position to control the remaining natural resources of the country went almost unnoticed. Two weeks later, on the 17th of June, the wooden steamer Portland of the North American Transportation and Trading Company entered Seattle harbor. Rumor had preceded her and the day before she had been met off Flattery by a tug with an Associated Press man on board. Before the Portland reached her dock the news of the Klondike was on the front page of every newspaper in the country. She was the first boat to come down the Yukon River after the ice was out; aboard her were sixty miners and \$800,000 in gold dust. The day before the Excelsior had reached Frisco with more riches. The lucky strike which George Cormack had made on Bonanza Creek in August, 1896, turned out to be one of the great gold discoveries of the world.

Within twenty-four hours the stampede was on and Seattle was turned upside down. Clerks, lawyers, longshoremen, and loggers took what money they had and were off. When the *Portland* left for Alaska a few days later, she was packed to the rails and ex-Governor McGraw, a last-minute convert, could hardly get aboard. The Chamber of Commerce feverishly sought to turn the stampede to their advantage and found a publicity genius in the person of Mr. Erastus

Brainerd, who was able to persuade the country that Seattle was the one port on the coast in which to outfit for Alaska. Who had time to pay attention to Senator Wilson? But in the midst of this rush it was noticed that on the 10th of July, 1897, Mr. Hill and his neighbor, Mr. Weyerhaeuser, were registered at the Butler Hotel.

There was precious little publicity over this visit, but the reporters got at Mr. Hill. What about that bankrupt Northern Pacific? What was going to happen to it? "The Northern Pacific," said Mr. Hill, with great caution, "is a very good railroad." He did not say that Mr. Weyerhaeuser was buying great timber tracts in Idaho nor that Mr. Weyerhaeuser was interested in Douglas fir, but as a result of the visit Mr. Weyerhaeuser bought 900,000 acres of Northern Pacific timber in Washington and subsequently bought more until his holdings from the land grant alone reached 1,525,000 acres. But this purchase was different from those partnerships that had gone before. When the Weyerhaeuser Timber Company was organized the old man kept the lion's share for himself. "Not for us, nor for our children, but for our grandchildren," he said. Some of posterity would have the usufruct of the forest primeval. In 1900 Mr. Weyerhaeuser had seven children; the population of the United States exceeded seventy-six millions of persons.

During this memorable visit thousands were on their way over the icy steps of Chilkoot Pass and down the White Horse Rapids to Dawson. Some of them found the gold they sought, but many more made their way back to Seattle, broke, to meet on the docks more thousands who never reached the Klondike at all, more thousands of discontented single men who might now be absorbed as migrants into sea-

sonal labor in the lumber camps and mills as the great timber boom began. It all turned out for the best, and Senator Wilson, having done what he could for the preservation of wild life and scenic beauty through the creation of Mount Rainier Park, conveniently got a loan from Jim Hill and in 1899 bought a controlling interest in the *Post-Intelligencer*.

8

Now, indeed, Seattle roared with a boom that did not stop from 1897 until the war. This "unfinished" town with ragged tide flats and patches of forest almost within the city limits, with many of its streets still dust or mud, in 1900 had 80,000 inhabitants. At its fringes the timber speculation absorbed the promoters with feverish interest and in town set off an orgy of real estate gambling. Outfitting for the Klondike and Alaska was making the wholesalers rich. The truck farms tended by Japanese on the city's edge were extended. In the salmon canneries on the sound the "cheap and docile" Chinese worked for fifteen cents an hour beside native labor who got more. Since the Nippon Yusen Kaisha had established Seattle as its port of entry in 1896, there had been a steady increase in ocean traffic with the Far East, sedulously nursed by Jim Hill who sought to lay down Bethlehem rails in Japan more cheaply than the British could do it, and bring home silk to add to the eastbound lumber traffic.

Around the foot of Yesler Way and in the dark alleys of White Chapel and Black Chapel that surrounded it, all mixed up with cheap hotels, sailors' boardinghouses, honkytonks and crimp joints, the Klondike saloons arose in their glory. In the middle of the bar of the Horseshoe Saloon, with its mahogany fixtures from the Centennial, was a solid silver horseshoe with gold nails, toe and heel calks. Behind the bar was a safe where incoming sourdoughs could stow their dust.

The barrelheads on the front of Joe Backer's "Our House" announced "Only Straight Whiskey for Our House Patrons. We could buy them Cheaper but We Wouldn't. We Would Have Bought Them Better but Couldn't." Any logger had to take his calks off to get in here but it was worth the trouble; the giant pillars with their glittering mirrors were known all along the coast. Upstairs twenty-five games were in constant session—roulette, faro, bird cage, chuck-a-luck, fan-tan, blackjack, and poker. Scattered about the square were hotels and roominghouses given over to the girls and a fly-blown assortment of tin-horn gamblers.

In such an atmosphere, in a day when the "triumph of business enterprise" had become an established fact and the Wall Street bankers were acknowledged as the lords of creation, there occurred an extraordinary and confused series of collisions in Seattle and the Northwest. Here, in what was a community with a mining-camp state of mind, the Federal government, in the form of the recently established Forest Service, collided head on with the lumbermen who were in the throes of grabbing the last of the nation's timber. In this collision, in which the whole question of conservation was drawn in, a number of Seattle promoters and eminent citizens were involved and one of them, as luckless a man as ever lived, was ruined by it and had an opprobrious noun made out of his name. At the same time the Wall

Streeters in the shape of the Morgans and the Guggenheims, with lesser satellites, arrived in person. Yet the nature of the region and the persons who inhabited it was such that the forms of exploitation so familiar were wrenched out of shape and fitted to an economy not found elsewhere.

In the background was the political control of the railroads which centered in Jim Hill. He had the Great Northern, and the adverse decision in the Northern Securities case in 1904 did not seriously affect his influence upon the Northern Pacific. By 1900 the era of railway building in the Middle West was over, but there were still more than a thousand miles of track to be laid down in Washington. If railroad land companies elsewhere were fading, it was not so with the Northern Pacific's Northwestern Improvement Company. In 1908 it was paying eleven per cent on its capital stock. A majority of the legislature came from the "cow counties" east of the Cascades and their election and control-intermittently contested by agrarian rebellionwas in the hands of the railway agents. Once when a set of antirailroad county commissioners had been elected, the Northern Pacific agent sent word that he would meet them at the county seat. The meeting was brief. Said the agent to the farmers: "I set a value of two bits an acre on our land in this county. Assess it at that or buy it or go to court." The neophytes were completely taken in by these whirlwind tactics and surrendered at once.

In 1904 Hill's general in the State was John D. Farrell. Antirailroad feeling in the State was running high when, during a Tacoma convention, it was reported that Farrell's private car had been backed into the yards and three men invited to dine. It was charged that one of these men was

awarded the governorship and another made chairman of the State's first Railroad Commission, a reform which the agrarians had just effected!

In the foreground was the timber rush which by now had become a scramble along the whole coast west of the Cascades. In Marion County, Oregon, fifty quarter sections of timber had been sold in '99 to a Wisconsin Lumber Company for four dollars an acre. By 1907, Jesse Jones of Houston—the R.F.C. unheard of—was willing to pay \$87.50 an acre for it and hold it at a valuation of \$150. The handful of great timber holders led off by Weyerhaeuser had pre-empted the lion's share and the late comers must bid high to get what remained.

The lumbermen knew well enough what the situation was. It was plain from what had happened in the Lake States that at the rate of cut the forests there were done for and in the South they soon would be. "The day of cheap lumber is passing and will soon be gone," said an official of the National Lumbermen's Association, "but the men who make money will be those who own timber and can hold it until the supply in other parts of the country is gone. Then they can ask and get their own price." A golden future was foreseen in which the grandchildren of Mr. Weyerhaeuser would be rich beyond the dreams of avarice.

All this was not lost upon Seattle businessmen. Many believed that their town would become the center of a great regional monopoly, and that to their doors the world would come begging for lumber at any price. So they trailed along in the wake of the great lumbermen, speculating on their own. Mr. Backus, the banker, was persuaded in 1897 to form a little partnership on the side. With three men he

organized the Port Susan Logging Company with a capital of \$16,000. Sixteen years later the four partners split a profit of a million dollars on their investment.

All hands now fell to to grab the last of the public domain, and the moves of the great timber companies were assisted by the stream of immigrants pouring into the Northwest, attracted by the boom. The Swedes, Finns, Danes, and Norwegians, lured on by the shipping agents in Scandinavian cities, landed by thousands at Seattle and there collided with swarms of Midwestern farmers, railroad brakemen, restaurant waiters, and tailors who figured on taking out a claim.

They had no intention of cutting timber; the land hunger of the first homesteaders did not bother them. This was public land and they had a right to a share. If you can get a piece of this pie, get it and sell it before the big boys hog it all. So William Z. Foster, a fireman on the Portland-Umatilla division of the O. R. & N. proved up on 320 acres in the Oregon Cascades with his brother, and then sold his claim. Communism was then some distance off.

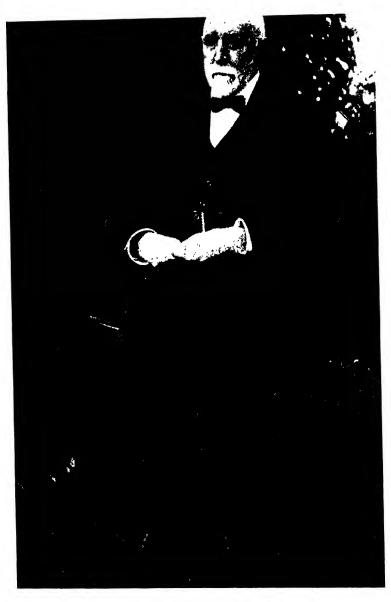
The timbermen were not slow to take advantage of so golden an opportunity. Dummy claimants were collected in Seattle, Tacoma, and Portland. Two hundred and thirty-five dollars was enough to pay the government's price for a quarter section, build the required cabin, and get final proof. Any sum up to five hundred dollars went to the dummy. In this way tracts of from eight to ten thousand acres of the best timber left on the public domain could be assembled at a cost of six dollars an acre. With the deeds safe in the hands of his principal in New York or Chicago, the agent left the woods and adjourned to the more convivial atmos-

phere of the Horseshoe Saloon in Seattle, there to compare notes with his fellow travelers in the business.

In Washington Gifford Pinchot in wrath and alarm watched what was going on. He had survived the storm over Cleveland's proclamation of the forest reserves and in 1898 had been edged in as chief of the microscopic Division of Forestry. With a two-bit appropriation, a mimeograph machine, a handful of clerks, and some forest rangers at sixty dollars a month and a horse, the forester set out to rouse the country.

Over on the peninsula, across from Seattle, four hundred thousand acres had been snatched out of the Olympic National Forest in 1900 and 1901 on the pretext that the land was chiefly suitable for agriculture and that "the settlement of the country was being retarded." It was odd that this timberland, ostensibly intended for the lowly homesteader, should shortly thereafter be owned in parcels as large as eighty thousand acres. Mr. Pinchot was incessant in his cries over such grabs and presently got some action. The commissioner of the Public Land Office at Washington was sacked, numerous minor officials were fired, and finally it was discovered that one of the most eminent of the sawlog statesmen, the white-bearded, benignant Senator John A. Mitchell of Oregon, had undertaken to hustle fraudulent claims through the Land Office for the bargain price of twenty-five dollars apiece. He was indicted, tried, and found guilty. In the capital, the Bureau of Corporations, spurred on by the agitations of a muckraker age, was making an investigation of the lumber industry and Mr. Pinchot's agents were scouring the woods, hunting for thieves.

In a rage, the lumber senators in February, 1907, tacked a



3. FREDERICK WEYERHAEUSER, 1834-1914
The German immigrant who became "the greatest lumberman in all the world,"



4. A bunkhouse in a Washington lumber camp, just before the Wobblies began their agitation in 1905.

rider to an appropriation bill providing that no more forest reserves could be created in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, or Colorado except by act of Congress. This took away the power which Cleveland had used and meant that once the bill was signed, the President could no longer proclaim new reserves in the public domain.

At once, Roosevelt and Pinchot and the officials of the Interior Department consulted together. Land Office and Forest Service men sat up nights platting maps and tabulating every possible acre and water-power site they could lay their hands on. (All this, of course, was in the public domain.) This done, on the 2d of March, 1907, the President proclaimed twenty-one new reserves. Having safely stowed this away—it was only the remnant, for long since the best timber had got into private hands—the President signed the appropriation bill. And just at that moment an eminent citizen of Seattle, Mr. Richard Achilles Ballinger, was appointed public land commissioner in the Department of the Interior.

Mr. Ballinger had come out to Washington just as the rush was getting started and in '94 had been elected a judge. Land and mining claims were the order of the day and, as a lawyer, he acquired a large practice. He even found time to codify the laws of the State and write A Treatise on the Property Rights of Husband and Wife under the Community or Ganancial System. But the public land was the absorbing question and since, at the height of the boom, Mr. Ballinger had been elected reform mayor of Seattle, it was rightly judged that he was a man of good will.

Ever since the Klondike rush, ten years before, the Seattle promoters had itched with the idea that Alaska was a land of promise. A number of persons had filed claims on Alaskan coal; the claimants included a number of Seattle worthies, among them a banker, a railroad man, the president of the Federal Lead Company, and a former governor. Already, in the spring of 1906, a syndicate had been formed by the Morgans and the Guggenheims, and a large number of copper properties, shipping companies, and salmon canneries had been lumped together. This syndicate controlled more than half of the traffic between Alaska and Seattle; at the docks it was met by the freight cars of Mr. Hill, also a close friend of Mr. Morgan.

In 1907 representatives of the syndicate had a meeting with some of the coal-land speculators—whose claims had not yet been validated in Washington—and the syndicate took an option to buy a half interest. Mr. Ballinger by now was land commissioner and he preferred to let the claims be handled by someone else in the department, lest his action be misconstrued. Then he resigned and went back to Seattle and made a ghastly mistake. As a lawyer he undertook to assist the promoters in pressing their claims. Then, in 1909, Mr. Taft appointed him Secretary of the Interior.

Over in the Department of Agriculture was Mr. Pinchot, and among the agents in the Department of the Interior was a young man named Louis Glavis. Presently the young agent became convinced that Mr. Ballinger could not be trusted with the administration of the public domain and told Mr. Pinchot about it. The years of Mr. Pinchot's agitation for conservation had taken effect; the robbing of the forests was going right on and here were those coal claims and the Guggenheim-Morgan syndicate. Mr. Ballinger had been in Yonkers talking with George Perkins, one of the Morgan partners; he had regretted that his son could not accompany

Mr. Perkins on a vacation trip to Alaska. All sorts of rumors were afloat, and in Seattle offices and bars the story was rehearsed over and over again. Then Glavis, fired for going over the head of his superior with his complaints, which were judged baseless by Mr. Taft, gave his story to Collier's. It was not charged that Mr. Ballinger had acted corruptly, but it was implied, and the article asked, "Do the Guggenheims Control Alaska?"

The uproar that followed was prodigious; the excitement of the fight over conservation reached its crest. Mr. Ballinger had said to a reporter: "You chaps who are in favor of this conservation program are all wrong. You are hindering the development of the West. . . . In my opinion the proper course to take with this domain is to divide it up among the big corporations and the people who know how to make money out of it and let the people at large get the benefit of the circulation of the money."

That was the logical extension of all the ideas of frontier exploitation that had gone before; such sentiments the Seattle Chamber of Commerce could cherish, but there wasn't any logic in the situation. People were roused, there were new ideas. No evidence of corruption could be found. The majority of a Senate Committee found Mr. Ballinger above reproach, but he had to quit just the same. Mr. Pinchot was fired. Mr. Ballinger went back to Seattle again, pursued by the word "Ballingerism," and after a while he died.

9

Mr. Hill, the great overlord of this region, was troubled. A genius in the business of transportation, he had now

reached his meridian. The control of the Burlington, acquired in 1901, had rounded out the two Northwestern systems—undisturbed by the coming of the Milwaukee—and provided a direct route from Puget Sound down into the Corn Belt, and old Weyerhaeuser "would rather have the lumber trade of Iowa than of any three states." Hill had now all that he could get, his years of fighting for swag were over; provided what was his was safe, he might now relax and become philosophical.

On the afternoon of June 1, 1909, Hill was in Seattle to open the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition. The promoters, in their enthusiasm, had determined to emulate Chicago and Omaha and have a fair of their own, including a Parthenon with a colonnade of untrimmed giant fir logs. There was no hesitation when they came to choose a distinguished guest to dedicate it. Hill was their boss and they gloried in him. Troubled in his mind, the old pirate surveyed the prospect, the still raw and unfinished city, raw and unfinished as St. Paul had been in his youth, but different.

"When capital can be enticed back into railway investments by assurance of proper protection and a reasonable return, the progress of construction will do more for the Pacific Northwest than for any other part of the country." Actually the railroad age was almost over; the man was crying for a vanished past. "The wild flight from experiment, the toying with untried ventures in social conduct and in the laws by which men have learned to live with and serve one another has gone dangerously far." Had he not given large sums to the Catholic Church in the belief that the Church might be a bulwark against those who were so possessed to alter and tear down? There was no rest. After

fifty years of undisturbed accumulation, his neighbor Mr. Weyerhaeuser had been got at by a magazine reporter and called "Richer than Rockefeller" and worth \$300,000,000. This figure was indignantly denied but it was noticed that no other figure was given. Lincoln Steffens hadn't been able to find out either. "The first and most imperative word is 'Conservation' . . . especially proper for you who are guardians of the last remnants of our wasted store of continental wealth; who have an evil example to avoid; whose mistakes are not yet beyond recall." Beyond recall? Why, only a few months before on the floor of the Senate the National Forestry Association had been derided because one of its vicepresidents was Frederick Weyerhaeuser. And this city? The controls of New York money were everywhere-Stone and Webster had acquired in 1892 the Union Electric Company, where Sidney Z. Mitchell had worked as an electrician, and thereafter bought up a large group of light plants, streetcars, and cable railways in Seattle and the neighborhood. Charles G. Dawes and his brother had bought up the gas companies in 1904. Yet this place was different. A group of meddlers and agitators had contrived to set up a city light plant and it was a going thing. The region was restless, dissatisfied, and demanding. "Oh, stand firm," cried Hill, "for the old, simple, immutable things."

The old, simple Get There and Get It First. Was it possible that those days were almost over? Around Hill the lumbermen were fighting over the timber in the old familiar way. There was the town with its casual and complacent city government, content with the police graft it got in the old and simple style. What was the matter with these people?

It was because, in this rush to the last frontier, there was

not going to be enough to go round, that many of his listeners were disposed to raise questions about those old things and see just how immutable they were.

In the midst of all the boom and get-rich-quick, there was no brand of agitation that Seattle didn't know about. Small as the town was in '89, there were between thirty and forty assemblies of the Knights of Labor there and a sizable contingent was sent to join Coxey's army in '93. The building up of unions, had begun in the eighties when the place was scarcely more than a village. Growing or shrinking with boom and depression, these unions were a defense for the urban wage earners against the great wandering body of migrants who drained into the sink of Seattle every winter to threaten the wages of those who "belonged" there. From time to time cross-fertilization between these two groups occurred and changed the coloration of both, but in the main the division has held until this day when the city unions, under the control of Dave Beck, the teamster boss, are pitted against the C.I.O., which controls the loggers, the fishermen, and the water front.

Accompanying the labor agitation was a constant political ferment. Populist discontent had been responsible for woman suffrage, the direct primary in 1909, the initiative, the referendum, and the recall, and the publicly owned power plant. Along with the agrarians were the revolutionaries—led off by the Socialists—and numbering every known brand of radical philosophy. In 1894, in the depths of the depression, Dr. Titus, a Baptist preacher, came to Seattle and in his church at the corner of Sixth and Jackson "taught the practical redistribution of wealth." With prudent foresight, the doctor had studied medicine and got himself a degree from

the Harvard Medical School. When his Seattle congregation got too hot for him and threw him out, he hung out his shingle as a practitioner and joined the Socialists. He speedily became their leader and so diligent was he in his labors that the Socialist paper speedily had five thousand subscribers.

Populist and Knights of Labor and Socialist ideas had soaked so deep into the supposedly conservative sessions of the A. F. of L. Central Labor Council that the debates and decisions made there regularly threw the Eastern labor bosses into panic. By 1903 the general strike as a tactic had been subjected to stormy discussion in the Council. In 1906 farmers were admitted as delegates from the State Grange, "not from class consciousness but from a realization that both would be benefited by common action at the polls." The waitresses and retail clerks had a union by 1900 and had forced a six-o'clock and Sunday-closing agreement on the stores.

A generation before the insurgent industrial unionists under John L. Lewis swept the country, the Central Labor Council in 1909 endorsed the principle of industrial unionism and commanded their delegates to the national A. F. of L. conventions to get busy. In the same year the United Mine Workers in the district declared for the "public ownership and operation and management of all those means of production that are collectively used." A frontier was one thing, but a frontier whose inhabitants were beset with ideas was no satisfaction to Mr. Hill.

The trouble was that there was no promise of stability; and doubly so here, for Seattle was no longer a mining camp, but was a large and growing city. Yet the exploitation of the region was being carried on exactly as it had been done in Goldfield and Virginia City. Wood was the basis of the regional prosperity, and if labor was migrant so was the industry. If too great an investment was made in a mill there was no hope of amortizing the cost before the accessible timber was cut.

Competition between the lumbermen was merciless with an alternate glut and famine. In an industry notable for closely held family businesses, the driving force was an intense individualism identical with what it had been in Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Arkansas, and Texas: Get in, cut it, and get out. Indeed, said William Mack of the Slade Lumber Company, a little later: "I don't know of any business in the United States that there is as much individuality about as there is in the lumber business in the State of Washington as it is conducted today." Only at the very top among the few great timber holders—the Weyerhaeuser properties were being slowly blocked in in preparation for the golden day when cutting should start—was there any release from the constant pressure.

10

Now the timbermen are gathering in Seattle for one of the prewar logging congresses. The hotel lobby is jammed. A lantern-jawed general manager with a leathery face and gold-rimmed spectacles has a badly chewed cigar in his mouth and is making notes on the back of a dirty envelope. Years of hurriedly eaten fried food have tied his stomach into knots, have worn his temper to a raw edge, and account for the pepsin tablets he carries with him. He writes frequent letters to the West Coast Lumberman asking why there isn't

a greater spirit of co-operation in the trade, but he knows better. If you want to buy a carload of No. 1 Common he will oblige you, but you had better watch your step.

The lobby is crowded with engine salesmen, cablemen, timber buyers and sellers, and other miscellaneous characters hovering on the edge of business. That lathlike man with the solemn countenance and stand-up collar is Mr. George Long of the Weyerhaeuser Timber Company. The ways of legislatures are no mystery to him. Nor are they a mystery to Mark Reed, the great logger of Shelton and son-in-law of old Sol Simpson. Before he dies Reed will serve seventeen years as Republican majority leader in the House at Olympia. Someone is asking for Howard Taylor of the Page Lumber Company. Mr. Taylor knows about legislatures too. At the moment he is speaker of the House.

Ed Larson, a wood superintendent from Cosmopolis, complete with tobacco grains at the corners of his mouth, is sitting in a lobby armchair near a convenient spittoon. He has no interest whatever in all this gab going on. He is fifty-five years old, but a good man still and is brooding on the prospects of a little girl for the evening. Can that man by the cigar counter be Shouting Gus Lind? It is. He has tempered his roar for the moment.

How is business? Do not ask. There never was a good year in the lumber business. Only last year a little lumber mill in Everett up the sound, representing an investment of two hundred thousand dollars cleaned up forty thousand dollars and complained bitterly. There is some talk about the recent investigation of the State's school land. Somebody's foot slipped and the investigation could not be headed off. The report found that "under a grossly fake cruise in 1901 the

timber on this 480 acres of land was sold for \$2,287.50 which today is estimated to be worth \$100,000." And again: "The notation on report of sale reads 'Mail deed or receipt to Geo. S. Long, Tacoma.'" Well, well. "The looseness and laxity of the land laws, the dishonesty, incompetency, and inefficiency of cruisers, together with other conditions, convince the committee that the state has been for years systematically defrauded and the people of the state have lost millions of dollars by the sale of state and timber lands for grossly and ridiculously inadequate consideration." Still, this is all in the day's work. But a little while later a shingle man was writing to the Bureau of Corporations in Washington: "The big profits made in both the lumber and shingle business have been made and always will be made by the stumpage owner . . . the Weyerhaeuser Timber Co., the Puget Mill Co., and, to a lesser extent, the St. Paul and Tacoma Lumber Company, which by the way is owned and operated by mighty fine people, have a monopoly of the standing timber in Washington." All these nubbins are discussed at odd moments.

For several days these men will argue, chaffer, go to sleep in sessions, compare notes on cutting their labor costs, consume mountains of beefsteak, French fried potatoes, custard pie, and coffee. At nightfall some will retire to their rooms, ring for more ice, and resume the attempt to draw to a pair. Ed Larson—and others—will move toward bed and beauty. Others still will sharpen their razors afresh for fellow members who happen to be looking the other way. For the moment the stinging smell of fresh-sawn lumber is out of their nostrils and the roar of the donkey engines in the woods is stilled in their ears.

11

North, south, and east of Seattle to the slopes of the Cascades; west on the shores of Puget Sound and the Pacific, scattered about on the slopes of a hundred ravines, were the logging camps. There in the bunkhouses—as well as along the Skidroad in Seattle—was the confluence of many streams of men. Lying in vermin-ridden bunks, huddled around the sheet-iron stove under the swinging kerosene lamp, the men dried out their soaked flannel shirts, dungaree pants and wool drawers, pasted cuts from the *Police Gazette* to the walls, played cards, and swapped Skidroad experiences.

Some were Swenstroms and Linds who had followed their jobs out from the Minnesota woods to be joined in the camps by Scandinavian immigrants who had landed at the port of Seattle. Here and there were Duprays and Rossnols, remnants-with battered names-of the Canucks who had come to Maine and Michigan so long before. There were McGraths from Brunswick and Lillards from Ashtabula, intended Klondikers halted at the water front without the two hundred dollars it took to get to Skagway or Dyea or the grub without which they could not get past the Mounted Police at the border. Along with these was a miscellaneous crowd of wanderers, single men who had fled the settled East to ease their unrest near the last frontier. Some had worked in the copper mines at Butte, others had been in Sierra stamp mills, others were firemen who had been "Rule G-ed" off every railroad in the West, and others still were roving, misfit sons of the rich or the godly. Frank Flickwer had left a wife and children in Chicago fifteen years before, and never saw them again; John Dollarhyde came from a Missouri farm.

Some of these men—but not many—were "stump ranchers," farmers interested only in earning a little money to help them clear land they were homesteading. They did not tarry long in the camps. The larger number sometimes, but not often, stayed a season through, going down to the Skidroad on the Fourth of July to blow it in and returning to the same stamping ground when the fall rains began and logging shut down. There were others, the itching-footers, forever on the move; these were the sharpest eyed, the most nervous and rebellious. At rare intervals a hobo would turn up, but he was a man of leisure who gave work a whirl only occasionally. His aim was to accumulate ten dollars and retire at once to the nearest jungle.

The buckers, who worked by themselves in the woods, included many Finns. They disliked to be bossed, seldom spoke, and were thought certain to lose their minds sooner or later. They could lie in their bunks in the evenings for hours before going to sleep, staring at the lamp and oblivious of arguments about whether grub and bunks were better at Rucker's at Everett or at Reed's camps—the two best outfits in the State in this respect—or whether they could be any worse than what you got in the neighborhood of Grays Harbor.

Work in the woods was from dawn until dusk, frequently so in the mills. Wages were no longer what they had been in the early eighties, the alternate glut and famine in the industry could depress wages forty per cent in one year. In 1914 the Page Lumber Company's pay averaged \$3.48 a day and Mr. Page thought with longing of the late nineties when

"there was not so much unrest" and "we paid ninety cents a day in the yards and didn't pay it in money." Most of the men got their jobs from Skidroad employment agencies—the "slave market"—and collusion between foremen and these agencies to split fees was common and often a foreman's perquisite.

The life was dangerous and the risks great. There was no compensation law for many years and nothing whatever that stood between the loggers and shingle weavers and the possibility of a crippled and armless middle age. In the woods there would be a sudden scream and grinding from a spinning drum, a rotten cable snaps and a choker setter jumps—but not in time. In an instant his body is lying over a log, his skull a bloody pulp. Did not old McGrath yell to his boy? Not in time, and old McGrath will not tell much of his mourning. Let not your heart be troubled; there are many more loggers idling along the Seattle Skidroad who will take his place.

Was it not "the policy of the companies to employ, as far as possible, unmarried men and encourage a migratory body of labor"? Was it not the custom for foremen to "highball" their men, exhausting them within a week and forcing them to quit from fatigue? Such tactics accelerated migration, until in 1911 a camp could be found where seven men were hired in one week to keep one man at work. All those menno matter how long they worked—were docked their first dollar for medical attention in case of need—from a doctor miles away or perhaps out of reach altogether. In 1914 the average Washington camp turnover was five hundred per cent.

Not all quit from fatigue. Plenty simply liked to be per-

petually moving on, proving their independence by "walkin' out" whenever they chose, plunging into uproarious and savage barroom brawls when all left the woods for the Fourth of July. Though some wondered in a blundering way about where they were going and why, and though others, when they reached forty, began to lose heart and furnish reasons why the suicide rate in Seattle shot up in October when logging was over, still others gave no quarter.

These "womanless, homeless, voteless" men, forever looking for an untraveled world whose margin faded as they moved, were the foundation labor of the entire Pacific Northwest. As it was in the camps and often in the lumber mills, so it was along the Seattle water front with the sailors on the beach, with the roving harvest hands and the migrants among the coal miners.

So there, spread out, was the economic pattern of the region. There was the great Northern Pacific land grant; out of it and around it were blocked in the great timber holdings of the principal lumbermen, patchworked together out of speculations, homesteader purchases, school land steals, and the plunderings of the Interior Department. Through this region ran the Hill roads to connect at Seattle, Tacoma, and Portland with the maritime traffic and the Orient. Seemingly it was almost an integrated raw material economy—timber, lumber, coal, fish, fruit, and grain. The metal industries of Seattle, such as they were, existed to supply chains, cables, sheets, and steel and iron supplies to lumber, shipping, canning, and mining. But lumber was chief of all.

If the business represented the last stand of intense individualism among the operators, it was so among the loggers. No mathematician existed who, calculating in a sort of fourth dimension, could estimate what the loggers had paid in cash—over a hundred years' time—for their itch to move and their you-be-damned, Paul Bunyan attitudes. Never did human beings indulge themselves in a more expensive luxury. But they had it. It was not surprising that, as the lumber boom roared along, there arose a strange and wonderful organization, the final flowering out of the militant migrant, the farewell defiance of the discontented at the edge of the last frontier: the Industrial Workers of the World, or, as they were better known, the Wobblies.

12

It was an ironical circumstance that the very region in which the I.W.W. eventually achieved its strongest hold should have all but baffled the Wobblies at the start because of its peculiar economy. In the end Seattle became one of the great strongholds of the I.W.W. but its formal organization occurred in Chicago.

The political ferment of the early 1900's had been at work. The muckrakers were busy with police graft; the "golden age of Socialism" was marching along in step with the golden age of business and of agriculture; preachers, real estate operators, atheists, and lawyers were flocking into the Socialist ranks. The revolutionaries and the direct-actionists watched all this with acidulous contempt, but they were affected too. Numbers of them believed that the moment was at hand to convert the workers of the country to One Big Union. Jack London told Charles Beard that some time in 1912 the hour of revolution would strike—this time positively.

After much preliminary discussion and correspondence, a determined group of about two hundred radicals met in Chicago on the 24th of June, 1905. Debs was there, and Mother Jones with her bonnet and reticule. Father Hagerty, a priest who preached industrial unionism, was with them and so was the elegant and dandified Daniel DeLeon, formerly a lecturer in Latin American Diplomacy at Columbia and thereafter the leader of the Socialist Labor party. But the most influential of all were the delegates—chief among them one-eyed Bill Haywood—of the Western Federation of Miners. The tie that bound these disparate personalities was a belief in industrial unionism and a virulent opposition to the organization and the ideas of the American Federation of Labor.

"This is," said Haywood, "the Continental Congress of the Working Class. . . . We are going down into the gutter to get at the mass of the workers and bring them up to a decent plane of living." The delegates strove mightily and put up the scaffolding for gigantic unions into which all the working men and women of the country, skilled and unskilled, were to be enlisted. They produced a constitution, the preamble to which—written by Father Hagerty—was committed to memory by thousands thereafter who roved the harvest fields, the mining camps and the bunkhouses of the West:

The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life. Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the earth and the machinery of production and abolish the wage system.

There was nothing discussed in this conference that had not in one form or another been threshed out years before along the Skidroad and the Seattle water front. Even in the Central Labor Council, the citadel of the very A. F. of L. craft unions that the Wobblies so much despised, the issues had been debated. It was a fertile soil for the new organization and in the autumn of 1905, three months after the Chicago meeting, little branches were springing up in Seattle and the neighborhood and presently the doctrine was spreading to Port Townsend, Tacoma, Aberdeen, Hoquiam, and North Bend.

But, after a running start, the One Big Union slowed down. In the end the greatest strength of the I.W.W. was in the Northwest, and it was not until the organization had come to terms with both the region and the people in it that it achieved its brief and flaming influence. Then, indeed, the Wobblies became, as they said, the "high divers of the labor movement."

However great the enthusiasm in the I.W.W. halls in coast towns, the great appeal must be made to the unorganized. That meant lumbering and logging. Jaunts from distant lumber camps down to the Skidroad hall were too much for all but the most resolute. Migrant labor, forever on the move over a wide area—"Freight trains run every day"—would have to have a different sort of organization.

So the I.W.W. delegate came into existence. This was the wandering organizer, riding an icy blind over Snoqualmie Pass, sometimes a solitary figure waiting for a manifest freight at a desert water tank, an official whose headquarters was where he hung his hat. Gradually it came about that the Skidroad I.W.W. Hall was a sort of regional headquarters

ters and forth from it went the delegates—"early Christians," they were sometimes derisively called—to spread the word.

Those at the first convention who came from settled Eastern cities-DeLeon and his round-the-radical-evening-lamp circle, the German immigrant Socialists with their wellthumbed Marxian texts, the flavor of beer, tobacco, and theological hairsplitting so characteristic of alien groups on the New York East Side and in the shadow of the Chicago Loop-all these with many native American revolutionary unionists from the cities regarded political action as necessitous. But the Westerners, especially the migrants, had no use whatever for such ideas. Their experience did not include it. Forever on the move, they had no ballot and wanted none. The functionaries of government they knew were the deputy sheriff, the constable-better known as the "town clown," and the local judge with his routine jail sentences. The small householder who trustingly cast a vote was the particular butt of their jokes; one of their favorite caricatures was Mr. Block, the thickheaded citizen who thought to better himself at the polls. They despised contracts. "We have not got an agreement existing with any mine manager, superintendent or operator at the present time," Haywood had said in 1905. "We have got a minimum scale of wages" and "the eight hour day and we did not have a legislative lobby to accomplish it."

It was a crowd of such highrollers, the "overall brigade" gathered up in Seattle, Tacoma, and Portland, who rode the rods into Chicago in 1908 and steam-rollered the I.W.W. convention. They taunted DeLeon as "the Pope" and threw out the political-actionists. Thenceforwards, the I.W.W., perpetually racked with faction, belonged to the West.

Their forays into Lawrence and Passaic and McKees Rocks and Philadelphia were spectacular but short-lived. Seattle became their great center and their home place.

To this organization were drawn the most nervous, rebellious, and quick-witted of the Western migrants, "the pork-chop philosophers," who favored direct action, stripped of all excess baggage. They were very conscious of their own merits and frankly declared that the Wobbly was "infinitely less servile than his fellow worker in the East." "The tang of the wild taints the free and footloose western nomad to the bone," said Solidarity modestly. "Nowhere else can a section of the working class be found so admirably fitted to serve as the scouts and advance guards of the labor army. Rather they become the guerillas of the revolution, the francs-tireurs of the class struggle."

In the Seattle Hall on the Skidroad, in Missoula, Spokane, and Goldfield, as well as along the Northwest water fronts, could be found battered upright pianos, a blackboard chalked up with announcements and warnings of lumber camps with bad grub and bunks. Each hall had a library that included dog-eared copies of Capital, Jack London's The Son of the Wolf, Gustavus Myers's History of the Great American Fortunes, Ragnar Redbeard's Might Is Right, and a dozen other volumes. Here the wanderer might pause and sleep off his jag of the night before, compare notes on complaisant waitresses, or write a piece for the Wobbly papers. Solidarity and the other I.W.W. sheets published quantities of roving correspondence. There, sometimes, small boys would gather to listen to Wobbly adventures. "They had wonderful stories to tell and all day to tell it in." If there was a freespeech fight on, the Wobs gathered here to stuff their caps with newspapers, "free-speech helmets," protection against night sticks. The cellar print shop, hard by the Skidroad saloons, vomited up a stream of pamphlet literature, and these were conned, criticized with no minced words, or applauded.

Striding along a wood road or hooking a ride on a speeder, the brim of his felt hat pushed up in front and his calked boots slung over his blanket roll, the delegate from Seattle turns up in camp. The loggers have seen his like before, many of them know the Wobbly "songs to fan the flames of discontent." At night the bunkhouse resounds:

Fifty thousand lumberjacks, fifty thousand packs,
Fifty thousand dirty rolls of blankets on their backs,
Fifty thousand minds made up to strike and strike like men
For fifty years they've packed a bed, but never will again . . .
Fifty thousand wooden bunks, full of things that crawl,
Fifty thousand restless men have left them once for all . . .

It didn't take the lumbermen long to discover what was going on. One Seattle woman who spent her childhood in her father's camp remembers the occasions when her father would come in at night—tense and silent. It meant that a Wobbly delegate was in camp. Let the saws be watched! A spike concealed in a log or a handful of emery powder meant a new Disston ruined.

In Seattle consultations among lumbermen were frequent. Perhaps the thing that infuriated them most was that the Wobblies talked in accents identical with their own. One night in Seattle there was an informal meeting to discuss ways and means. One operator, steaming with wrath, demanded the raising of the Vigilantes and direct action. When he finished another operator, who had listened intently, ob-

served: "If you lost your money, you'd be the best I.W.W. in the State."

Old J. V. Patterson, president of the Seattle Construction and Dry Dock Company, was caught off base by the I.W.W. In 1914 this admission was forced out of him: "If they [the I.W.W.] are in error, I believe in the utility of error . . . the contrast between the I.W.W. and the unions is tremendous to me. The I.W.W. appreciates the individual. He has got something to offer above the sordid rotten existence. He has got ideals. And he is nearer to Almighty God than any other political propagandists that I know of." As the official of the Slade Lumber Company had said: "I don't know of any business in the United States that there is as much individuality about as there is in the lumber business in the State of Washington."

So, in this uneasily shifting population a number of roughly defined groups gradually emerged. Around the railroad men and the timbermen and the absentees headed by the Guggenheim Syndicate were grouped-often unwillingly-the little lumber and shipping operators and the local promoters. The control that these groups exerted promised the exhaustion of the raw materials on which the region depended. There was nothing else for them to do. Opposed to them were the agrarians, the Populist remnants, the Grangers, the I.W.W., the labor unions, the schoolteachers, the Socialists, the Skidroad revolutionaries, and the conservationists engaged in this "dim battle in the West." It was plain that sooner or later a fight was inevitable. And at last it came, shrouded and still more confused by the World War. As though to mark the end of an age, on the 4th of April, 1914, old Weyerhaeuser died. Most of his generation had gone before him, but his philosophy never wavered and was handed on intact to the Washington timbermen. The size of his fortune was not revealed, he made no endowments, his charities filled a tablespoon. In death as in life he was the great Square Toes and his colleagues and competitors mourned him. "He was," said the *American Lumberman*, "their recognized leader of whom they were always proud and never ashamed."

13

The opening and closing engagements of this fight brought the Wobblies into a violent and bloody collision with the timbermen. Between those two engagements—the first in 1916, the second three years later—lay the war, the great lumber strike, and the establishment of the eight-hour day. When it was over, the I.W.W. was all but completely broken.

In 1900 there had been only half a million people living in the State of Washington. By 1914 there were twice as many and most of them were crowded on the narrow shelf between the Cascades and the Pacific. Lumber production shot ahead, the harbor was filled with shipping, and since Seattle was two days nearer to Yokohama than San Francisco, a large part of the Japanese silk traffic was dumped on Seattle wharves to be put on Jim Hill's freight cars. The restless ambition of the local promoters had leveled many of the hills on which the city stood. The flow of money was great enough to sustain a generous municipal corruption. In 1910 the genial Hiram Gill ran for mayor on an avowed redlight platform and was triumphantly elected. Gill had be-

gun life as a waiter in a water-front café and believed in the "sacredness of graft." Word was broadcast that Seattle was more open than ever and every train brought its quota of peroxide blondes, gray-cloth-topped shoes with pearl buttons, and smooth gentlemen in rich brown suits and diamonds.

Up the hill at the corner of Seventh and Spring was the brick basilica of the First Presbyterian Church. Over this church presided the Reverend Mark A. Matthews, a fundamentalist exhorter, who had succeeded in gathering together one of the largest congregations in the United States. Gill had migrated to Seattle and Matthews was a migrant too. He came from rural Georgia and had a strong leaning toward evangelism and the flames of hell. After some thought the reverend determined to get Gill and with no difficulty whatever amassed a quantity of evidence. A recall election in 1911 threw Gill out and the reverend, by now a real political power, was known as the Black-maned Lion of Seattle; he was a go-getter, the friend of the powers that be; he "belonged to the leading clubs" and preached on "Hell, Heathenism, and Holiness." His was a boom church in a boom city.

Outwardly Seattle was rich, yet a closer examination of the neighborhood showed how top-heavy this 1914 prosperity was. Most of the camps and lumber mills were shut down. A lumberman was writing: "In December, 1913, and at the present time there are probably more unemployed persons in the State of Washington than there have been found there in any past year." (This was from a town where "there was always a floating population of 10,000 in the winter.") The old Providence Hospital had been taken over and set up as a great flophouse, the Hotel de Gink, under

the direction of Peter Pauly, King of the Hoboes. There was, in Seattle, as Mr. McAdoo found elsewhere, "a strange, listless unrest."

August, 1914, brought the war. At first little attention was paid to it. But presently the first ripples of the coming war boom could be felt. In the lumber mills, as the fringe lumber operators plucked up hope again, there were increasingly bitter complaints about wages, for the cost of living had begun to rise. The urban unions grew apprehensive; only with difficulty were seven antilabor propositions defeated on the referendum in 1916. On the other hand, shipyards were springing up overnight; the railroad switching yards were swamped with Russian orders; the Northern Pacific and the Great Northern sheds could not accommodate the cotton, automobiles, locomotives, barbed wire, and munitions bound for Vladivostok. It was the war boom that saved the unions.

In this confusion the I.W.W.—whose Seattle membership had dwindled to fifty persons in the prewar depression—began to revive. The Wobbly loggers convened on the Skidroad and determined to make a drive on the camps. "All speakers are instructed to recommend to the workers the necessity of curtailing production by slowing-down and sabotage. All rush work should be done in a wrong way." This was the "conscious withdrawal of efficiency" that might force concessions. (It should be remembered that, whatever the strength of the urban unions might be, in the mills and the woods there had never been a union worth the name—except among the shingle weavers—and the I.W.W. was far more an agitation society than it was a union.) The tension increased, the Wobblies agitated incessantly. Then the storm broke.

Everett, Washington, is just thirty miles up the sound from Seattle. With a population of 35,000 it was the perfect example of a frontier promoter's town set down in the twentieth century. Long before, the townsite had been bought by Rockefeller agents. Then the timbermen took it over. At the waterside was a great Weyerhaeuser mill. Among the leading citizens was David M. Clough, a lumberman in the New England tradition, born in Grafton, New Hampshire. On his slow way westward he had paused in Minnesota long enough to be governor of that State. He kept his logger tastes even in old age. Once in the Commercial Club at Everett he was seen to tip his hat repeatedly to a man standing in the lobby. "I always tip my hat," he said, "to a better woman chaser than I am." Along with Governor Clough was his son-in-law, Roland Hartley, who subsequently served as governor of Washington. The townsite men and the timbermen controlled the banks, Stone and Webster held the utilities, and most of the inhabitants in one way or another were dependent on the lumber mills.

In 1916 there was a strike of shingle weavers and the timbermen didn't waste time in attempting to break it. At once the Wobblies intervened and drove the timbermen into speechless rage. "We propose," said Governor Clough, "to clean Everett of all members of the I.W.W. and to forceably prevent the incursion of any more of their ilk." There was a succession of free-speech fights and finally some forty of the Wobblies were taken to the outskirts of Everett where they were forced to run a gantlet of clubs, revolver butts, and blackjacks.

At once the Seattle I.W.W. office was roused to action. A notice was chalked on the blackboard that on the following Sunday—the 5th of November, 1916—there would be a meeting on a forbidden street corner in Everett. The Wobblies took collections and pooled their resources. There weren't enough interurban cars to take them over in a crowd; hiring trucks cost too much money. Finally they struck a bargain with the owner of a small steamer, the *Verona*, to take them to Everett. For days they advertised the meeting far and wide. In Everett the deputies were laying in a stock of rifles.

Early Sunday morning two hundred and fifty Wobblies—along with a salesman who wanted to see the fun—crowded on the *Verona* and set off up the sound. As the boat entered Everett harbor they could see the rising ground and a viaduct crowded with spectators. As the *Verona* approached the dock the sheriff hailed her. "Who," he said, "is your leader?" The whole boatload were splitting their lungs with "Hold the fort for we are coming," but the hail was heard and the reply was characteristic: "We are *all* leaders!"

The next instant, as the steamer was made fast, the ambushed deputies opened fire. Pandemonium broke loose and before the *Verona* was able to back away from the dock there were two dead men on the dock, five dead Wobblies on the boat, and more dead in the muddy water of the harbor. Twenty-eight of the Wobblies were wounded and sixteen of the deputies. When the *Verona* reached Seattle the police were waiting; they found in the bloody and bulletriddled boat some packages of red pepper, some stockings with stones, and some empty cartridge shells, but no firearms. The Wobblies themselves were borne away to the morgue, the hospital, and the jail. The dead, with their eyes closed

and features composed, were photographed and the likenesses of the "martyrs" broadcast.

It was a crucial time. The war had involved the emotions of the whole population; the sentiment against American participation—the Grange was bitterly opposed, the Seattle Central Labor Council voted unanimously against the war and condemned conscription—became entangled with the war boom. By degrees the I.W.W. became the spearhead of the opposition to the war in the Northwest, just as the lumbermen finally became the most rabid patriots.

"You ask me," said a Wobbly, "why the I.W.W. is not patriotic to the United States. If you were a burn without a blanket; if you had left your wife and kids when you went west and had never located them since; if your job had never kept you long enough in a place to qualify you to vote; if you slept in a lousy, sour bunkhouse and ate food just as rotten as they could give you and get by with it; if deputy sheriffs shot your cooking cans full of holes and spilled your grub on the ground; if your wages were lowered on you when the bosses thought they had you down; if there was one law for Ford, Suhr, and Mooney, and another for Harry Thaw; if every person who represented law and order and the nation beat you up, railroaded you to jail, and the good Christian people cheered and told them to go to it, how in hell do you expect a man to be patriotic? This war is a businessman's war and we don't see why we should go out and get shot in order to save the lovely state of affairs we now enjoy."

Such was the attitude of the organization brought to trial in the King County courthouse on the 5th of March, 1918. It was a strange occasion. Technically this was a murder

trial. Actually it was a struggle of the established order against the rebels, but with a difference never known in Lawrence and Passaic and McKees Rocks. On the one side were the timber owners and the townsite promoters of Everett, frontier magnates in a business in which technology had scarcely made a dent. Opposed to them were a crowd of itching-footed free-for-alls. And this case was to be tried before a jury on which the regional Populist sentiment had placed women, and the trial itself—there had been a change of venue—was to take place in a city in which agitation had been constant almost since the day of its founding.

Seventy-four Wobblies had been charged with murder in the first degree. Of these seventy-four but two had been born in the State of Washington! Twelve were foreign-born; sixty were Americans, migrants from every State in the Union. Swamped with defendants, the prosecution had finally selected one: Thomas H. Tracy, aged thirty-six, a teamster from Nebraska and a member of the Industrial Workers of the World.

As the trial went on and the story was rehearsed, the whole machinery of the regional economy was revealed. When Fred Savery, a Canadian logger, born in Russia, took the stand, he wore the only clothes he had: a red mackinaw shirt, stagged-off pants, calked shoes, and a battered felt hat. When Tracy, the Nebraska teamster, was turned over to the prosecution for cross-examination he was asked:

"Where did you vote last?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;I never voted."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Never voted in your life?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;No. I was never in one place long enough."

On the 5th of May the teamster was acquitted. (The I.W.W. had raised \$37,000 to defend him—including a contribution of \$3.75 from the Benevolent Society for the Propagation of Cremation of Yonkers, New York.) All the Wobblies still jailed in both Everett and Seattle were discharged. At once they set out for the cemetery, there to mourn over the graves of the Wobblies who had died on the *Verona*. None of the Everett deputies, or vigilantes either, ever saw a courtroom.

In April, 1917—while the Everett prisoners were still in jail—the United States entered the war. And at almost precisely the same moment, twelve years of Wobbly exhortation took effect: the long-awaited Northwest lumber strike for the eight-hour day began.

The lumbermen were in a fix. The war brought them golden opportunities—lumber rising to fantastic prices, cost-plus contracts for cantonments and war supplies being shoveled out—yet now the strike which had started in Idaho with the early spring log-drive was spreading steadily to the coast. On the 9th of July they formed the Lumbermen's Protective Association and determined to raise half a million dollars to break the strike. They would maintain the ten-hour day; any mill that cut hours would be fined five hundred dollars a day for so doing. They refused government mediation. Within a few days thereafter the loggers had walked out en masse—between forty and fifty thousand of them, all over the Northwest.

All summer long the loggers hung around the Skidroad until by September their money had run out and the resources of panhandling were exhausted. The men began

drifting back to the woods and the lumbermen believed that the strike was broken. The Federal government was clamoring for airplane spruce, production had dwindled, and lumber prices were going up like a rocket. Then the Wobblies sprang their surprise by "striking on the job." Since the demand was for an eight-hour day, the men would quit after eight hours and start moseying toward the bunkhouse. An enraged bull-of-the-woods would fire the lot and take on a new crew, only to have the tactic repeated.

At this juncture the government, to get spruce at any cost, organized the Spruce Production Corporation with several of the leading timber magnates of the Northwest on its board of directors. At the head of this organization was placed Colonel Brice Disque, who had resigned from the army not long before to be warden of the Michigan Penitentiary. His business, in co-operation with men who had been cutting each other's throats for years, was to get out the spruce. Colonel Disque was not familiar with lumbering and he was assisted in his endeavor by young officers who did not know a spruce from a sumac. All this was catnip to the Wobblies and their allies.

It was almost impossible to get lumber for cantonment building and ship carpenters wouldn't handle ten-hour lumber. In desperation Disque sent soldiers by the regiment into the woods, drafted men taken from behind desks, ribbon counters, machine benches, and ticket windows, men who had never used a saw or set a choker in their lives. Finally, on the 1st of March, 1918, Disque threw up the sponge and, by the authority of the government, decreed the eight-hour day. This was not all. There must be an end of lice-ridden

bunks; camps would have to furnish sheets and bedding. With grinding teeth the operators gave in—save one, who shut down his mill for the duration of the war rather than strike his colors.

There was a catch to all this, of course. The catch was the most ambitious company union ever devised—the Loyal Legion of Loggers and Lumbermen—in which the loggers and their traditional enemies were organized together. But here again the situation demanded and the region forced upon the government an industrial union. It was that or nothing. To put a stopper to the I.W.W. each man must pledge that "I will stamp out any sedition or acts of hostility against the U. S. government which may come within my knowledge and I will do every act and thing which will in general aid in carrying this war to a successful conclusion." The Wobblies' reply to this was to join the 4L's at once!

On the 1st of May, 1918, their efforts brought to a triumphant finish, the Wobblies in the camps solemnly burned their blankets. They did not know it, but their day was almost over.

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In Seattle, meanwhile, the war prosperity inundated the city. The labor turnover was prodigious. If you don't like your job, there's another waiting. More than twenty thousand men worked in shipyards that had not existed before the war. The average number of wage earners in Seattle jumped from 11,523 in 1914 to 40,843 in 1919. It was almost impossible for a family to find shelter, and rents were out of

sight. Wages couldn't keep up with living costs, but they rose. The union organizers worked without stint; union memberships skyrocketed; and as the union treasuries swelled, the Central Labor Council resounded with more demands. Get our share of the cost-plus swag while the getting is good.

There had been intense opposition to the war. When in 1917 Banker Backus became chairman of the Washington Committee of the Military Training Camps Association, the radicals' only comment was "What Do You Expect?" The first Federal espionage and sedition laws were passed in June, 1917, and before long the Federal dicks were busy in Seattle. A former president of the Central Labor Council was arrested, tried, and convicted under the Espionage Act. The president of the State Grange was jailed because of his opinion that it was a "businessman's war." At a city election Miss Anna Louise Strong, a social worker and daughter of a local parson, was recalled from her job on the school board. A town in which, for forty years, there had been continuous agitation of one sort or another offered a rich haul for the patriots and the Department of Justice. The State Council of Defense-of which Mr. Henry Suzzallo was chairmanfound that there was "a very considerable pacifist element among the school teachers of the state" but "the prompt and fearless action of canceling teachers' certificates . . . where the offenders' disloyalty was well established was one of the most effective and wholesome steps taken by any public official in the state."

It was remarkable that as this fervor burned so brightly, the malcontents only increased their agitation. The labor forces in the region had reached the zenith of their strength; in the lumber camps, along the water front, in the shipyards, and uptown it was all the same. They were a strange assortment; old-line A. F. of L. delegates in the Council had Wobblies as neighbors and all mixed in were the Socialists, the newly born Communists, and other revolutionary splinters. On many the upheaval in Russia had acted like champagne; the longshoremen called upon the President to withdraw troops from Russia, and throwing a picket line around the *Delight*, loading munitions for Kolchak, they shunted her back and forth along the coast until the Red Army had taken Vladivostok. Just before the Armistice, on the 9th of November, 1918, the metal trades workers of the Pacific Coast convened at Seattle and—anathema to Gompers—called for the organization of one great metal trades industrial union throughout the country. There wasn't anything they couldn't do!

The fury of the shipping men and the lumber operators knew no bounds and when, on the 14th of January, 1918, the legislature passed the criminal syndicalism bill over the governor's veto, it was a storm signal. Already on January 3d the Metal Trades Council had voted for a "Soldiers, Sailors and Workmen's Council" to help the demobilized and enlist the disillusioned veterans in the unions. It was plain enough that cost-plus was over, that a wave of unemployment was coming-but there was one of the yards with a contract for sixty-eight large steel vessels not even started! On the 21st of January thirty thousand shipyard workers struck and fifteen thousand from Tacoma followed them. At once the Metal Trades asked the Central Labor Council to call for a general strike-it had been debated for a decade!-and unanimously the Council called for a referendum.

15

Seattle, Washington, February 6, 1919. Cloudy. Moderate westerly winds. Direction SE, velocity 12 miles per hour, lowest temperature last night: 37°. The Post-Intelligencer reached the sidewalks with a screaming headline: "Strike Begins at Ten Today." On the front page was a cartoon with the caption "Not in a Thousand Years!" showing a flagstaff over Seattle with a red flag flying above an American flag. Unfortunately in the excitement the cartoonist lost control of himself and drew the flag with but twenty-one stars. This raised some doubt as to whether the Post-Intelligencer knew just what nation it was supporting.

The Seattle General Strike was one of the most extraordinary exhibits ever put before the American people. Miss Strong, ousted from the school board, was an editorial writer on the unions' own paper, the *Union Record*. The day before the strike she wrote: "We are starting on a road that leads No One Knows Where." This was a precise statement.

At the center of the strike was the Labor Council with the unions grouped around it. The political insurgents were on the fringes of the strike and had, supposedly, little to do with it. But many of the insurgents were members of unions and furnished most of the fervor and the steam. One after another the unions fell into line; some—like the carpenters—with dread and others—like the lady barbers and the newsboys—with enthusiasm and excitement. Indeed, the newsboys offered a resolution, hastily squelched, providing that if the strike was prolonged and employers refused a settlement, the Committee should take over the shipyards and run them.

When the General Strike Committee, consisting of delegates from a hundred and ten unions, from the water front to the hotel maids, fixed upon February 6th as the day for the walk-out and began to plan what they would do, there was no consensus of opinion. A committee from the Labor Council, all of them old-timers who foresaw the end, strove desperately to set a limit of from twenty-four to forty-eight hours to the demonstration; they were voted down.

After five days and nights of continuous session the haggard General Strike Committee succeeded in arranging that the hospitals would be taken care of, that there would be lights, that foodstuffs would be convoyed into the city, that special eating houses were opened, that the dispensing of drugs was assured. Then, on February 6th, the hour came. Sixty thousand working men and women knocked off work. The entire city came to a halt, and at nightfall the town was policed, and successfully, by the strikers' gunless police.

On the morning of the 7th the distracted mayor—Ole Hanson, an irresolute man full of high sentiment and gab, who always had Americanism on tap and subsequently became something of a Chamber of Commerce hero everywhere but in Seattle—demanded that the strikers quit. He threatened martial law and the importation of soldiers. He declared that he had fifteen hundred police and fifteen hundred soldiers and called upon the citizens to go about their business. Nobody paid any attention to him. The strike was a success, but what were the unions going to do with it? They did not know. On Sunday the 9th, after a session of twelve hours, the Committee determined to continue the strike. But the lines were weakening already, some of the streetcars were moving. The next day the barbers and the

teamsters determined to go back while the cooks and long-shoremen stood fast. On the same day it was known that the Tacoma Committee—in charge of a similar strike in Tacoma—had determined to call it off. The weary Committee threw in the sponge and voted to adjourn the strike on Tuesday noon. Already raids on the radical organizations were going on, Wobblies were being pulled out of every alley and cellar. In Chicago, Haywood and more than a hundred other Wobblies were on trial.

No sooner had the strike collapsed than the already rising reaction redoubled in force. The shippard strike dwindled and then fell in. The men went back, and presently yards began to close. The collapse of war prosperity was at hand, and while it sagged the red raids were incessant. They reached their climax in the autumn.

On November 11, 1919—Armistice Day—the American Legion was to parade at Centralia, a little lumber center not far south of Seattle. The whole truth of what happened will never be known, but for many weeks the lumbermen and local patriots had been consulting about what should be done to rid the place of Wobblies. It was rumored that violent action of some sort would be taken on Armistice Day and the Wobblies armed themselves and stationed men in their hall and at various points near by. The line of march was so arranged that the parade must pass the I.W.W. Hall twice. When the parade passed the second time, the procession halted. Probably no one knows who fired first. The commander of the Legion, a local lawyer and one of Gil Dobie's football stars at the university, was killed and so was a Legionnaire bootblack. One of the Wobblies, a veteran also,

escaped from the hall and killed the son of a prominent lumberman in his flight. He was overtaken and lynched that night. Two Wobblies and four Legionnaires were killed; the job was completed with the sacking of the I.W.W. Hall.

There was a great murder trial-the West Coast Lumbermen's Association gave a thousand dollars to help prosecute the Wobblies, and many lumber companies followed suitwith crowds of Legionnaires crowding the courtroom day after day. The Wobblies were defended ably, but it was no use. Though later on they revived a little and pulled one more lumber strike, their power was broken and their day was over. As intense a crowd of individualists as ever lived, it had been their function, in a region populated with belligerent individualists, to cry out the hopelessly lopsided nature of the economy and to burn with the wrongs of the migrants. They had done it, and from one end of the country to the other the story of the lousy bunkhouses, the accidents, and the terrible hours had been shouted from the housetops. They had matched the clumsiness and violence of the lumbermen with clumsiness and violence of their own. Forever bickering among themselves, each one must be a star in his own right. In 1915, the night before his execution on a Utah murder charge, Joe Hill, the Wobbly poet, wrote his last poem. It sums up perfectly the state of mind of the I.W.W. in the days of their migrant prime:

My will is easy to decide

For I have nothing to divide

My kin don't need to fuss and moan

"Moss does not cling to rolling stone" . . .

This is my last and final will,

Good luck to all of you. Joe Hill.

Just before he died he sent a telegram to Haywood. "I have lived like an artist," he said, "and I shall die like an artist."

16

No sooner had the depression of 1921 shown signs of lifting than there began in Seattle and the surrounding countryside—as throughout the rest of the nation—a surge of speculation. The forces of the labor agitation had been broken, the Sailors' Union of the Pacific and the Longshoremen's Union were prostrate, the I.W.W. was drifting into history. Now businessmen felt they could go ahead. There was an epidemic of mergers. What had once been Mr. Backus's Washington National Bank, and had been consolidated into the National Bank of Commerce in 1906, was put into the Marine Bancorporation, a holding company. The influence of Amadeo Giannini, who was bringing banks all over California under the sway of his Bank of Italy, was potent in the States to the north: in combination there was strength, it appeared; or, if not strength, at least an opportunity for financial speculation. If the lumber business was not gaining in strength, at least the paper and pulp business was, and here again there were mergers as smaller concerns joined to form the Rainier Pulp and Paper Company, the Grays Harbor Pulp and Paper Company, and the hundred-million-dollar Crown-Zellerbach. The Weyerhaeusers, of course, became interested in pulp also. There was a new infiltration of absentee ownership: Hearst bought the Post-Intelligencer; the chain stores were invading the Northwest. A revived real estate boom moved the business district even farther north from Pioneer Square and the Skidroad. Even the urban unions of Seattle, struggling to hold their own, succumbed to the speculative habit, and there arose strange enterprises supposedly owned by the unions but with a distinctly wildcat flavor: the United Finance Company, the Padilla Bay Land Company, the Federation Film Company. And as the stock market boom gathered headway, security speculation became a mania here as elsewhere.

The Yakima Valley, just over the Cascade Mountains, blossomed as never before. Almost everything would grow there and did: apples and peaches and pears and apricots and cherries; the State of Washington was on its way to producing one-third of the commercial apples grown in the United States. The apples moved out of the port of Seattle on new refrigerator ships, thus providing a traffic that took up some of the slack left by the declining silk trade from the Orient. True, the apples were picked by migrants working their way northward each season from the truck gardens and citrus groves of Southern California; to harvest the Wenatchee and Yakima apples requires fifteen thousand persons, but only for a period of thirty-six days. At the very moment when a few logging operators were making a fitful attempt to encourage the settlement of family groups near their camps, the agricultural Northwest was becoming more and more dependent upon the services of homeless and voteless nomads, forever on the move in their rusty Fords and Chevrolets. But who could look upon the smiling Yakima region or the Puyallup Valley with daffodils turning the countryside to gold and not see in it a land of boundless promise?

The basic resource of the region, however, was the forest industries. As the population of Seattle swelled, there gradually appeared small industries not dependent upon the forests, but for the region as a whole wood was vital. More than half the wage earners of the State were directly or indirectly dependent upon it. And despite the growth in the paper and pulp business the forest industries were not flourishing. The high point of lumber production in the United States had been reached in the first decade of the century, when the Northwest timber boom had been at its height. Since then, though production in the Northwest had increased, there had been a decline for the country as a whole. The competition of new materials cut down the demand for wood, the great days of railroad and mine construction were over, and the farms of America, the most valued market of all for lumber, had been in the grip of crisis since just after the war. As the national consumption of lumber declined, competition among the lumbermen of the Northwest became more desperate. What chance for farsighted forest husbandry when the only way in which an operator could make a profit was by slashing headlong through the forest? The Forest Service found in 1928 that six and a half million cords of sound wood were left behind in the Douglas fir region every year, "a million more than the entire amount of pulpwood produced in the United States." As lumbering pushed back farther into the hills, the task of getting to rail or tidewater became more expensive, the seasonal character of the industry became more accentuated, the obsolescence of plant became more rapid. Only the great operators, like the Weyerhaeusers, and little fly-by-night "gyppos" could survive. By 1926, when the slowing-down in production finally reached Washington and Oregon, the accessible timber in Washington was mostly cut and the yet undeveloped forest regions of Oregon became

the last great timber stand. More rapidly than in any other part of the country—with the possible exception of Oklahoma—the economy of the region was passing through the familiar stages of promotion and boom and bust.

Then came the stock market disaster of 1929. It swept through Seattle like a scythe, cutting down the stenographers and filling-station attendants who had been speculating on margin, throwing out on the street the young graduates of the University of Washington who had found careers as bond salesmen, and striking amidships the jerry-built structure of the timber industry.

17

The descent of the depression smote the little lumber towns, the feeders of Seattle, with paralysis. Sash and door and plywood mills and box factories nearer at hand followed in their wake. Lumber production in the United States in 1932 dropped to less than it had been in 1869, when the country had had a third of its present population. The little town of North Bend was on the verge of starvation when relief came to the rescue, taking over the support of virtually the entire population. Aberdeen and Hoquiam, larger towns already threatened by the receding timber supply, were almost as hard hit.

The culmulative effect of these collapses gave force to the second wave which struck Seattle after the stock market crash. To the traditional floating population of unemployed migrants was now added a flood of mechanics, truck drivers, and stenographers. Before long there were thirty thousand unemployed in the town, and the number continued to

mount. To meet this desperate state of affairs there was founded the Unemployed Citizens League, the first of the self-help organizations that presently cropped up all over the country. The jobless harvested fruit, mended shoes, cut wood, and did most of the other things that the other self-help ventures did, but in Seattle there was this difference: it was certain that the organization would be plunged into politics. For there was a growing feeling of bitterness now such as had not been known since the days of the General Strike.

The unrest was not confined to the unemployed; it was duplicated among other groups-the schoolteachers, the small householders, the old people (Washington ranks high among the States in the percentage of its aged), and the middle class generally. A region which had always been hospitable to political notions-to Populists and Prohibitionists and Knights of Labor, revolutionaries of all types, and other agitationsnow offered a fertile field for Townsend and his pension scheme, the Utopians, Upton Sinclair's EPIC, the Technocrats, and many others. Clubs were formed to resurrect and study the ideas of Edward Bellamy. Those who were both unlettered and reactionary found a refuge in William Dudley Pelley's Silver Shirts and other organizations of an avowedly Fascist tinge. Franklin Roosevelt's power speech at Portland during the 1932 campaign stirred the Northwest and offered a point of coalescence for many of the dissident groups. The city churned round and round in ideas, while the alarmed employers held the dikes for business.

The unrest brought to the surface—as always in times of stress—a variety of extraordinary characters. There was John Dore—famous subsequently as "the revolving Dore"—who

when he was running for mayor in 1931 and asked for the votes of the Unemployed Citizens League, declared that he was "in favor of taking the huge fortunes away from those who stole them from the American workers"; and who later said he would preserve law and order with machine guns if necessary, "to keep the unemployed from demonstrating." There was Vic Meyers, a Seattle jazz-band leader who became lieutenant governor. There was Howard Costigan, a former barber and follower of Upton Sinclair who became one of the most successful of left-wing exhorters. One of the most remarkable things about Seattle is the number of residents who, in the promotion of ideas, have gone through numerous sea changes: the town might justly be called a museum of idea promoters. What was there in that environment that took E. C. Ault first to an "Equality" Socialist colony and thereafter through a spell with Parson Titus on the Socialist to the proud editorship of the Union-Record, the trade union daily of the Northwest and finally left him with a little printing company? What made Doc Brown, the advertising dentist, run for mayor as a Socialist, just miss election, and then roll over into the Democratic ranks and win? What took the brilliant but eccentric Marion Zioncheck, the campus independent, to Congress-and to a suicide from the window of a Seattle office, with a note left behind him which said: "My only hope was to improve the condition of an unfair economic system . . . "? And what took Johan Nygaardsvold from his job as a Seattle longshoreman and made him at last Prime Minister of Norway?

In the political turmoil of the worst depression years the remaining Socialists and the scattered Wobbly veterans had a part, but their strength was gone and now the Com-

munists took their place. All three groups had been jockeying to capture the control of the Unemployed Citizens League and by February, 1933, the Communist contingent had got it. On the first of March, 1933—as the banking panic was sweeping the country and Roosevelt was preparing for his first inauguration—a large contingent of the unemployed advanced upon Olympia, the State capital, and the Vigilantes rose against them. A week before the march an organizer for the American Vigilantes had gone to Olympia and organized a thousand citizens; as their bulletin put it: "Temper your severity to suit the occasion and if forced to fight don't forget that nothing so swiftly sickens a mob as brutal stomach-wrenching, soul-sickening force, fearlessly and judiciously applied." When the demonstrators approached Olympia they were met by the Vigilantes and the deputies, and the crowd was broken up. The end of the Unemployed Citizens League was in sight. Their co-operative projects dwindled—as did similar enterprises elsewhere in the country—because there was no capital on which to operate; because the business element opposed them, not wanting to see any movement succeed which might divert retail trade; and because the radicals in their own ranks were not, at that time, interested in the success of the League as a means of self-help, but wanted to turn it into a political organization. As the relief policies of the Federal government were set in motion, the League began to dwindle and the radicals turned their attention elsewhere.

In the autumn of 1935 they set themselves to forming a great coalition movement which united in one body most of the depression-born dissident groups. It was called the Washington Commonwealth Federation. Without

making nominations of its own it proposed to endorse the candidates it favored in the Democratic primaries. The Communists were formally debarred, but as individuals they promptly got in anyhow. The Federation took over the publication of the Commonwealth Builder, renamed it the Sunday News, and made it the chief mouthpiece of the political leftists in the Northwest. (In 1938 the name was changed again, to the New Dealer, thus symbolizing the metamorphosis of the progressives and radicals.)

The discontent of these days was reflected also in a wave of labor organization which swept the Northwest in the wake of Section 7a. At the moment in 1934 when the President stood at Grand Coulee and described in glowing terms the promise of the great hydroelectric development in the Northwest, the labor forces on the other side of the Cascades were in motion.

This movement eventually grouped itself about two contrasting personalities. One of them was David Beck, once a Seattle laundry driver and now head of the Teamsters' Union in the Northwest and one of the most belligerent leaders in the A. F. of L. He was alert, clever, and ruthless. Beginning as the boss of the teamsters, he speedily came to dominate most of the Seattle urban unions. He created what was termed a "voluntary N.R.A.": in exchange for recognition of his unions, Beck would undertake to "hold down competition." In this manner he speedily entrenched himself in the laundry and dry cleaning businesses and began to extend his sphere of influence. "There are," said Beck, "too many filling stations in Seattle. More are threatened. We're going to close some of them. First, I advise promoters against starting new stations. If that doesn't work, the Teamsters'

Union simply will refuse to serve them. They won't last very long." Many employers welcomed this sort of alliance; others feared and hated it, more especially those little businesses which the highhanded Beck methods forced to the wall. Index figures showed that the cost of certain commodities rose fast in Seattle, and the "voluntary N.R.A." was considered in large degree responsible for the climbing cost of living. But Beck was friendly with the mayor, John Dore, and presently had him completely under domination; Beck's attorney, George Vanderveer, who ironically enough had made his fame defending the Wobblies in the wartime espionage trials, was an able ally; and thus Beck seemed on his way to becoming the unquestioned boss of Seattle.

But he had an adversary in Bridges, the leader of the longshoremen. Bridges did not live in Seattle. Born in Australia and for many years a sailor, Bridges was making a precarious living as a longshoreman in San Francisco when the waterfront strike of 1934 brought him to notice. The Longshoremen's Union was then all but moribund, with a flyblown assortment of officials in the East who for years had done little more than hold to their jobs and keep on good terms with the shipping companies. It was the same with the International Seamen's Union: Andrew Furuseth, a great power in years gone by, was still its president, but in name only: he was old and enfeebled. Nor were the shipping companies, for that matter, in health. The hundreds of boats built at cost-plus during the war had subsequently been sold at a few cents on the dollar; speculators had bought many of them; there had ensued a period of murderous competition for freight traffic between the two coasts by way of the Panama Canal; some of the steamship lines existed only

by grace of subsidies granted by an acquiescent government, and were run by promoters who sought to enrich themselves through these subsidies. Roused to their opportunity, the sailors and longshoremen on the Pacific Coast reasserted themselves; there were tie-ups which held ships at Seattle and other coast ports for months at a time.

Meanwhile the great basic industry on which the whole region depended was in worse straits than ever. After generations of land grabbing and throat cutting, the timber owners found themselves with a shrinking market, rising costs, high taxes on standing timber, and labor that demanded a living wage. They were caught in the jaws of a multiple vise. Their one hope of escape lay in the aid of that agency which in the past they had either fought or attempted to control-the government. The Pacific Northwest Planning Commission said, in one of the gentlest understatements ever uttered: "The report recognizes that past public land disposal has placed more land in private ownership than private owners are now able and willing to manage for continuous production upon a basis approaching sustained yield." The report suggested in effect that the government should buy inaccessible standing timber and cutover land; that it should provide "long-term public credits at low interest rates for timber operators working on a sustained yield basis"; that it should reduce taxes and "liberally aid the forest owner in protecting his forest land." If these things were done, argued the report, the timber companies could afford to undertake "sustained yield"-in other words, could select only those trees ready for cutting, and not mow down everything as they moved. In short, let the government with money and men rescue the chaotic industry; in return for this aid the industry will refrain from butchering the remaining forests! To such a pass had the lords of the Northwest timberland come. The best of the timber was still privately owned; indeed, ownership had changed little since 1910, when the Corporations Bureau published its report showing the vast tracts owned by Weyerhaeuser and the Northern and Southern Pacific Railroads. The supply was dwindling but the old line-up was still unbroken. These were the leading timber owners of Washington in 1938:

Northern Pacific Railroad Company 794,000 acres	
Weyerhaeuser Timber Company 740,000	
Cascade Lumber Company 166,000	
Crown-Zellerbach Corporation 128,000	
Milwaukee Land Company 121,000	
Northwestern Improvement Company 86,000	
Long-Bell Lumber Company 86,000	

Still the land grant stood! And round it were the old familiar names. The holdings of the Weyerhaeuser Timber Company were, of course, but a part of the Weyerhaeuser properties. In Idaho, Minnesota, in the South and East were many more. In 1934 the Weyerhaeuser corporations throughout the country exceeded thirty-five in number. In 1937 a member of the Washington Planning Council estimated that on the basis of the average cut for the period 1925-1929, the timber in Washington classed as merchantable under present logging and milling practices would be depleted within fifteen years.

If this were not trouble enough, it remained for the whole industry in the Northwest to be plunged into a labor convulsion. In an industry so little mechanized, with so much dependence upon unskilled labor, labor cost must represent

a large fraction of the whole cost of doing business; operators, with their eyes on this figure, will do all possible to sweat their men and shave wages. Labor conditions had worsened during the nineteen-twenties ("We have treated these men like schoolboys long enough," said a Grays Harbor operator in 1923; "we are going back to the old policy"); the blanket stiff had appeared once more (evidence that bedsprings and bedding were being abandoned); and when the crash came, bringing long shutdowns, the conditions of the loggers and mill hands became desperate. No sooner was Section 7a in existence than these men began to organize.

As we have already seen, there had never been a union worth the name in the woods; the I.W.W. had been an agitation society with a small membership even at the height of its power. Now, by the law of the land, organization was encouraged; the loggers were organizing; but what were they to join?

The American Federation of Labor had sunk into apathy and corruption; its leaders had become little more than jobholders. From the beginning its administration, always in the East, had had no conception of the far Western temperament. Yet there it was, the only refuge in sight. So the Sawmill and Timberworkers Union was organized and given over to the control of the Carpenters, whose national executive, William Hutcheson, was one of the old A. F. of L. crowd. Neither he nor his subordinates had the vision or the competence to handle this huge crowd of loggers and mill hands, and when, in May, 1935, forty thousand of them struck in the Northwest the conduct of the strike was up to the men themselves. In Washington they were beaten

through the use of the National Guard and every repressive measure available; but the union had been established.

Then, in 1936, came the earthquake that shook the A. F. of L. to its foundations and led to the formation of the C.I.O. under the leadership of John L. Lewis. The very basis of this movement was the idea of the industrial union. the only form adaptable to the great mass-production industries and to the unskilled. The arguments for industrial unionism had been a well-worn theme in Seattle for forty years; the I.W.W. had set up One Big Union as an ideal; "Resolutions" Duncan for years had argued for it to the deaf ears of A. F. of L. conventions. With a rush the longshoremen, then the lumberworkers, then the Newspaper Guild, and then the furworkers in Seattle and the Northwest, climbed into the C.I.O. Bridges, the leader of the West Coast longshoremen, was appointed Lewis's general on the Coast. The Communists supported the move lustily and, in politics, the Washington Commonwealth Federation did likewise.

Beck's rival had come to power. What would happen now to Beck's teamsters, to his "voluntary N.R.A.," to his rule as boss of Seattle, and to all the tight, efficient little business methods that had put him on top?

There ensued a war, long drawn out, in which almost every sort of violence was used, with coast ports tied up, and A. F. of L. carpenters refusing to saw wood cut by C.I.O. loggers, and the whole economy of the region moving toward a standstill. Prize fighters and thugs were hired for the teamsters and the famous "goon squads" were formed. Seattle newspaper boys were mauled and beaten, dissenting members of the Central Labor Council were threatened. To

these tactics, the longshoremen and timberworkers of the C.I.O. replied with brawn and bludgeons, Beck's mayor threatened to run them into the sound. Hell was let loose.

This violence and confusion did not impress favorably that vague part of the city's population known as the "general public"-the people who had no stake in either of the unions or in the businesses which might be able to maneuver such a situation to their advantage. Once more, with labor hopelessly divided, the way was open to reaction. In the spring of 1938 a conservative mayor and City Council were elected. In the summer of 1938 the reaction had proceeded so far that signatures were found to put Initiative 130 on the Washington ballot-a proposal which would have all but emasculated the labor unions in the State. Similar moves were successful in Oregon. Terrified by such tactics, the two sides began to look for a common ground, and eventually found enough to enable them to beat the proposal at the polls in November. By a narrow squeak the unions had pulled through. They are more friendly now; the president of Beck's union, Daniel Tobin, led a demand for unity with the C.I.O. at the A. F. of L. convention last fall. But still the fissure between them runs deep. Now as always, in depression as in prosperity, this region of individualists is an arena of quarrelsome strife, of lawless direct action, of hot if constantly shifting animosities.

18

So there she is beside Puget Sound: Seattle, settled by migrants, resting upon a region in which migrants still predominate. Her chief industry is in trouble, her shipping and her forests are dependent upon government aid, a large proportion of her population relies upon that aid for subsistence.

Her pioneer days are barely over. As late as 1920, Washington was still a frontier State in its population; only thirty per cent of its inhabitants had been born in the State, and there was still a large excess of males over females. The scars upon her countryside are still the scars made by pioneers who came briefly, used up those resources of the land which could be slashed or dug away, and moved on. All up and down the line of the Seattle and International Railway are crossing signals for vanished towns. In desolate clearings are vast mounds of blackened sawdust; at Cathcart the schoolhouse is a windowless shell. Here and there the undergrowth of the Northwest jungle has crept out over the denuded terrain and covered the skeletons of abandoned mills. A bleached hollow between two hills reveals abandoned company towns with broken panes and floors littered with old way bills; abandoned company stores with rusted scales; abandoned company houses. Beside the right of way of a logging railroad—the rails long since removed—a sagging water tank leans, its rotted posts ready to give way at any moment, but the water running still, trickling down over the tufted moss and yellow ferns that have overgrown the tank. Day before yesterday this region was a wilderness; yesterday it was a frontier; now it is a place of ghosts.

Yet still the migrants come. To those who trek north for the apple-picking in the Yakima Valley have been added now a multitude of desperate farmers from the droughtstricken Middle West: it is estimated that up to 1936 over forty-two thousand persons fled the drought to Washington, planning to become permanent residents. The itching-footed wanderers of the early days, with the "tang of the wild in their blood," have become, at last, a great horde of wretched families with children who never saw the inside of a school—in a State which boasts its literacy—and who live from hand to mouth. If Square Toes, the lumberman of legend, is in deep water, the descendants of Paul Bunyan cannot be sure from day to day whether they will eat or not.

Around the world, industrial economies move closer toward centralized control; the strangulation in which capitalism finds itself is visible everywhere. The prospect ahead of Seattle differs only in degree and in detail from that which confronts Shenandoah and Louisville and Birmingham and Omaha. But the differences must be enumerated. The forests are not all gone and there is yet time to save them. The soil of the region is fertile beyond belief and, having once blossomed like the Garden of the Lord, may do so again. There is space here for millions of men and women, if only they can learn to build an economy which does not force them to destroy the very resources that might make them rich. At Grand Coulee rises the dam that will furnish both water and power to resuscitate the central plateau; already power is being generated at Bonneville and the first distribution is made, and not as the absentees would have it.

And there is the character of the people. In all the storms and trials that have beset the region there has been as much freedom here as in any part of the country—perhaps more. Beck is mortal, Bridges is mortal, the Weyerhaeusers are mortal; but the atmosphere which has spawned ideas and brought people here to realize them, the courage to break

away from precedent and boldly strike out for new solutions—these are here still. Stricken the region is now, its pioneer economy a wreck. But its people still are free. And they do not accept failure. "I have got to go over to Olympia tomorrow," says the Seattle housewife, "to help put pressure on the governor."

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The city editors of American newspapers are a mine of information on our recent history; no one has yet carefully explored this mine.

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#### Shenandoah

- 1, 6, 7 and 8. Dick, for the Farm Security Administration
- 2, 4 and 5. Brown Brothers

#### Louisville

- 1. Ewing Galloway
- 2. Keystone View
- 3. Sekaer, for the United States Housing Authority
- 4. Brown Brothers

## Birmingham

- 1. Walker Evans, for the Resettlement Administration
- 2 and 4. Rothstein, for the Farm Security Administration

## Omaha

- 1, 5, 6, 7, 8. Vachon, for the Farm Security Administration
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